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Reyes orders tighter security in Abra

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16 drown, 4 missing in Southern Leyte fluvial procession

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MRT-8 project proposed to link Metro to Rizal

■ **ENTERTAINMENT / A2-1**

Richard to renew Regal contract, contrary to mom's statement

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BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, January 16, 2006 ★★ 7 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 39 P18 website: www.inq7.net

NPAs free 9 comrades in Batangas City jail raid

By Delfin Mallari Jr. and Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau
and Luige A. del Puerto *in Manila*

BATANGAS CITY—POSING AS POLICEMEN AND using human decoys, communist New People's Army rebels sprang nine of their comrades from the Batangas provincial jail in a smooth operation that only took minutes.

NPAs FREE/ A4

Viet 'pho' soup empire targets 'lugao' country

HO CHI MINH CITY—IT'S Vietnamese soup for the soul.

Round the clock for over a century, millions of Vietnamese have enjoyed nothing better than a hot bowl of *pho*, a traditional soup that blends minced

VIET/ A22

SOUP-ER SARAP!

Senators to GMA: Don't dictate to us

Lakas plans 7 revisions to Charter

By Cynthia D. Balana and Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S PARTY will propose seven amendments to the Constitution in its bid to move the country to the parliamentary system in six months, working documents made available yesterday to the INQUIRER showed.

"It will be tight but doable," said the President's political adviser, Gabriel Claudio, of the timeline proposed during Saturday's caucus of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats.

"I see no reason why the party will not rally behind that timeline," said Claudio in a phone interview.

The amendments, proposed by Speaker Jose de Venecia, are:

- Transformation from the presidential to the parliamentary system.
- Establishment of a unicameral legislature and abolition of the Senate.
- Lifting the term limits of elected officials.
- Providing for a five-year term of office for all elective officials.
- A ban on political "turncoatism."
- Creation of autonomous regions toward the establishment of a federal system.
- Easing of restrictions on foreign investments in the country.

The working documents included a paper titled "Option A with Timeline." It included the approval of the proposed seven amendments either by a constituent assembly or a

LAKAS/ A21

FVR now says he's flexible on GMA term limit

By Nikko Dizon

FORMER PRESIDENT FIDEL RAMOS, USING his trademark cryptic replies, does not sound like he has lost a battle against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

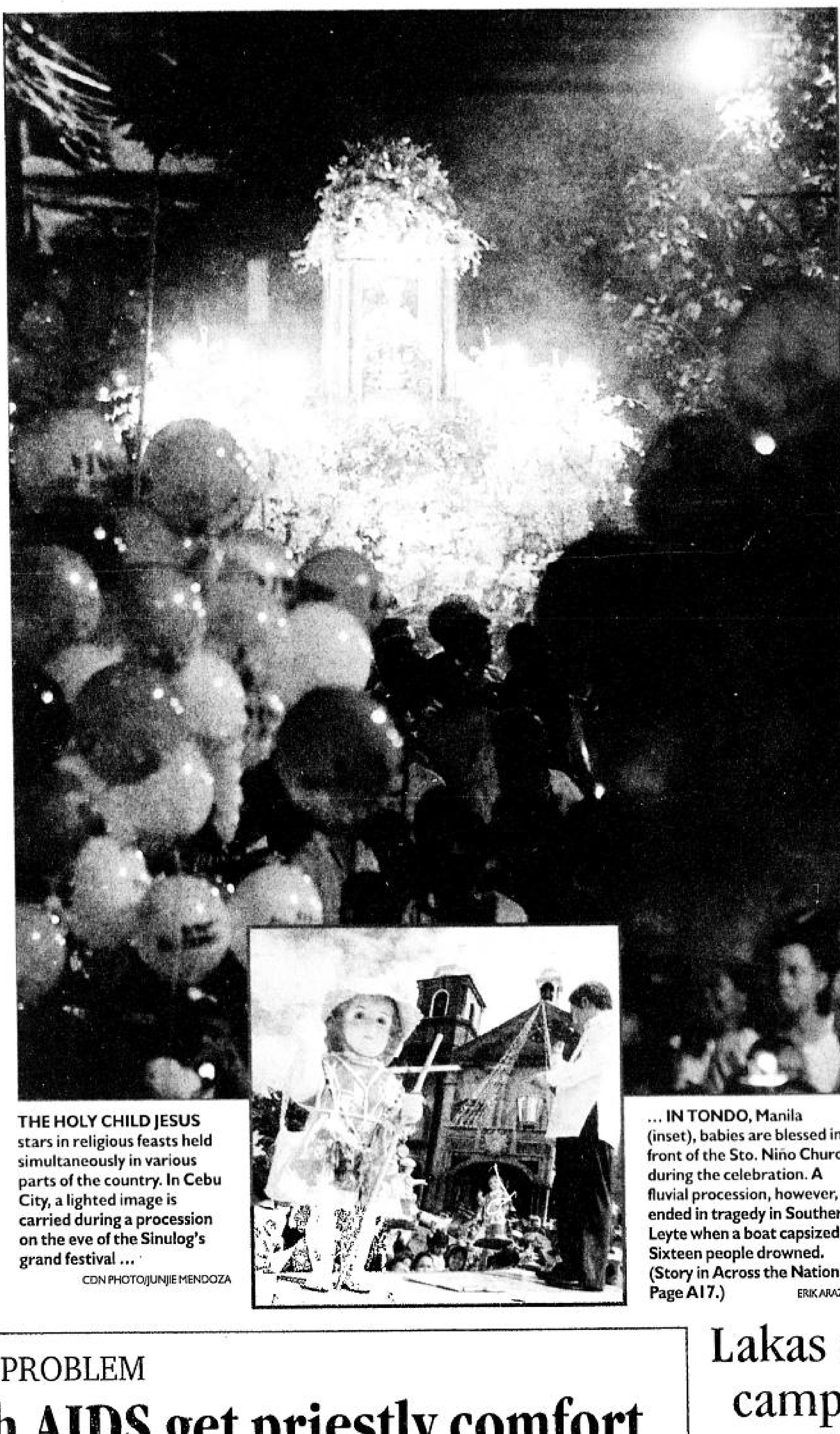
"You have to be flexible," said Ramos, a day after a caucus of the ruling Lakas-CMD agreed to move the country toward a parliamentary democracy.

"Today, I cannot be carrying bombs to be thrown in your direction. Why? I'm boarding an airplane. We won't be able to get past security," said Ramos, looking relaxed at a news conference before boarding a flight for a weeklong business meeting in India.

The 77-year-old Ramos was rebuffed twice by Ms Arroyo in his call for her to relinquish power and run in elections in 2007 upon the institution of a parliamentary system of government.

During the Lakas-CMD caucus on Saturday night, the ruling party approved a resolution "firmly in support of the fulfillment by the President of her present constitutional mandate to serve in office until 2010."

FVR/ A21



THE HOLY CHILD JESUS stars in religious feasts held simultaneously in various parts of the country. In Cebu City, a lighted image is carried during a procession on the eve of the Sinulog's grand festival ...

CDN PHOTO/JUNJIE MENDOZA

... IN TONDO, Manila (inset), babies are blessed in front of the Sto. Niño Church during the celebration. A fluvial procession, however, ended in tragedy in Southern Leyte when a boat capsized. Sixteen people drowned. (Story in Across the Nation, Page A17.)

ERIK ARAZAS

Joker: Senate won't write own obituary

By TJ Burgonio and Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO's fresh push for a new Constitution and a parliamentary system by the middle of the year has run into a wall of opposition in the Senate.

Maverick administration Sen. Joker Arroyo and his colleagues yesterday scoffed at the President's timetable, reminding her that she and other Lakas party leaders could not dictate on the Senate.

"The Con-cha troika can't rush the Senate on that," the senator said of Ms Arroyo, former President Fidel V. Ramos and Speaker Jose de Venecia. "The troika mistakenly believes that the senators would agree to write their own obituary."

The Senate will be abolished under the unicameral form of government espoused by Lakas.

At the Lakas national directorate meeting on Saturday, Ms Arroyo said Charter change "must be achieved by the middle of this year."

The Lakas national directorate rejected Ramos' proposal that Ms Arroyo cut short her term in 2007 to pave the way for a parliamentary government.

De Venecia is proposing a French-style transition parliamentary government under which Ms Arroyo would remain president but share some of her powers with a prime minister who would be the chief operating officer.

Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the committee on constitutional amendments, revision of codes and laws, said the Senate was not a rubber stamp.

Reacting to Ms Arroyo's timeline for constitutional change, Gordon said: "I will always vote for the interest of the country, not for the interests of President Arroyo, De Venecia and Ramos."

Deputy Speaker for Mindanao Gerry Salapuddin acknowledged that the battle to amend the Constitution would shift to the Senate.

After emerging from the Lakas national directorate meeting that ended at midnight, Salapuddin disclosed that the party led by its chair, Ms Arroyo, would "negotiate" with senators starting next week.

"Not one of the (administration) senators

SENATORS/ A21

HIDDEN, GROWING PROBLEM

Persons with AIDS get priestly comfort

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE PALE, ALMOST GHOSTLY FIGURE, lying in a coma at the far end of Pavilion IV of the San Lazaro Hospital in Manila is expecting death any day now.

Nita, 27, is in the final stage of her long and losing battle with AIDS. It was the homecoming gift she got from the father of her two daughters, a longtime seaman who died of the virus three years ago.

The younger of the two is just 5 years old. The girl is infected as well. She's now taking medication, but doctors say it's just a matter of time before the virus claims her, too.

Her elder sister, 6, will soon be a total orphan.

Theirs is the new and often obscured picture of the country's "hidden and growing" problem with the AIDS virus.

At least 2,260 cases were documented last year, but the figures don't actually give the real score. Many "persons with AIDS" still live in the dark, fearing discrimination.

Dr. Roderick Poblete of the Philippine National AIDS Council once said a conservative estimate would be around 10,000, considering that officials might be missing two to three more victims for every documented case.

As far as the council knows, at least 749 of the AIDS victims got the virus while working abroad. Seafarers like Nita's live-in partner top the category. They far outnumber entertainers, at least 268 to 50, as of last year.

Nita, who hails from a family of farmers in Central Luzon, knew nothing about the statistics or the extent of the AIDS problem in the Philippines.

When her partner, then in his 40s, returned home three years ago, all she saw was a healthy-looking man coming home from another hard stint abroad.

They slept together and, soon, she was pregnant with their second child. But little did she know it was a betrayal. He had gone on sexual adventures abroad and came home with AIDS.

"She kept dreaming about him a few weeks ago, probably because of her deep-seated anger at the man," says Fr. Genaro "Gennie" Diwa, who has been a father fig-

PERSONS/ A22

Lakas mounting divisive campaign for Cha-cha

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

THE RESULTS OF THE WEEKEND caucus of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats left the political horizon more muddled than it was before the party members met.

The caucus miserably did not live up to the billing that it would resolve the issue of President Macapagal-Arroyo's tenure and has left the public guessing who won or lost in what was touted as a showdown between Ms Arroyo and former President Fidel Ramos over the proposal to cancel the 2007 elections and allow the President to serve out her term until 2010.

Published reports indicate that the coalition is flexing its muscle to ram through the no-election proposal, in the fashion that its majority in the House of Representatives strangled in September 2005 the impeachment complaint against the President.

The no-election scheme clearly contradicts Ramos' preferred plan—for the President to step down in 2007 and for the installation of a parliamentary system after across-the-board general elections.

The caucus apparently swept these differences under the rug and deflected a damaging con-

LAKAS/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The Eastern section of Northern Luzon, Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/01/16/06

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

Text us your feedback: Inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	**Cebu**	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Partly Cloudy

Solons see further delay in approval of '06 budget

By TJ Burgonio

SENATORS ARE APPREHENSIVE THE PASSAGE of the P1.06-trillion national budget would be further delayed because the House of Representatives appears to be more engrossed with the move to amend the Constitution.

"It looks like it's going to be further delayed. They're more interested in Cha-cha (Charter change) than in passing the budget," said Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the committee on ways and means, in an interview.

As Congress resumes sessions today, the House is expected to give priority to President Macapagal-Arroyo's push for a new Constitution by the middle of the year than any piece of legislation.

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraula said on Saturday he had drafted a Charter that would allow Ms Arroyo to delegate her powers to a prime minister during the transition from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government.

The budget measure, which by law has to emanate from the lower chamber, remains stuck in the House committee on appropriations which failed to hold hearings due to lack of a quorum.

Recto warned the lawmakers that by opting to tackle Charter change before the budget, they would be earning the anger of the people who will be further burdened with the implementation of the 12-percent expanded value-added tax (VAT) next month.

"They will only gain the ire of the people," said Recto. "After asking them to pay more taxes, we are not going to give them anything in return by passing the budget. They're being shortchanged and given the raw end of the deal."

The senator urged the congressmen to speed up the deliberations on the budget and hasten its transmittal to the upper chamber for approval.

Apart from being the most important piece of legislation,

RECTO

the budget measure would address the Filipinos' basic concerns such as health, education, food, shelter, law and order, among other things, Recto said.

"Can Cha-cha address all these concerns? Besides, you can't convince them [the people] to support it if you don't pass the budget first. We must give them a reason to support Cha-cha," he said.

Tomorrow, the Senate committee of the whole resumes its hearings on the national budget, specifically that for the Development Academy of the Philippines, Philippine Sports Commission, National Anti-Poverty Commission, Philippine Tourism Authority and Duty Free Philippines, among other agencies.

"We will be ferreting out excessive spending by seeking justification for expenses done by the government," Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said in an interview.

Seeing a delay in the transmittal of the budget measure by the House, the Senate convened itself into a committee of the whole in mid-November to scrutinize the budgets of every government department and agency.

Senate President Franklin Drilon last month voiced optimism that the budget, the biggest ever submitted by a President to Congress for approval, would be passed by the end of the first quarter this year.

The senator said he expected the House to conclude its hearings, finish its debates and approve the General Appropriations Act on the floor, and transmit it to the Senate by the middle of February.

Reyes orders tighter security in Abra after latest killing

By Artha Kira Paredes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LA PAZ, ABRA—INTERIOR SECretary Angelo Reyes yesterday ordered police officials in Abra to tighten security and contain further violence following the murder of Mayor Marc Ysrael Bernos of this town on Friday.

Reyes, who paid his respects at Bernos' wake here yesterday, said the peace covenant signed by warring Abra officials on Aug. 29, 2005, had largely held until the murder of Bernos, a local opposition leader.

Bernos, 31, was shot dead while watching a basketball game at the Sangguniang Kabataan park here at about 7 Friday night.

Reyes said he ordered Senior Supt. Marcelo Manalo, Abra police director, to increase police presence and visibility in the province and set up check points.

"The Philippine National Police's Special Action Forces will continue its presence [in the province]," Reyes said.

He said if Bernos' murder signaled the start of fresh hostilities among warring politicians in the province, the police were ready to prevent further bloodshed.

"I hope this would end," Reyes said.

Reyes swore in the slain mayor's younger brother, Vice Mayor Joseph Santo Niño Bernos, 27, as the new mayor on Sunday.

The younger Bernos took his oath of office beside the coffin of his brother.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I would take my oath in front of my brother's coffin," said Joseph.

Bernos' father, former Abra Gov. Andres Bernos, said the family believed the mayor's murder was politically motivated.

Reyes said he had ordered the police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in the Cordillera to quickly solve the case.

"They will not go home until the case is solved," he said, adding that the CIDG was also ordered to furnish the Department of Interior and Local Government with daily reports on the progress of the investigation.

Reyes said there would be no "sacred cows" in the implementation of the law. "We will be firm but fair."

Supt. Leonardo Dionisio, Cordillera police director, echoed the vow, and said: "We would exclude no one. Even powerful and influential people would be included in the investigation."

Dionisio said an eyewitness had provided a description of the gunman. He said the police were following through on leads regarding the identity of the people behind the murder, but declined to elaborate.

The mayor's wife, Joy, said, "Every Abrenian knows who killed my husband." She also declined to name any suspect.

Joseph said it was sad that his brother was killed while serving his last term as mayor of La Paz.

When asked if he thought the death of his brother might have been provoked by his open declaration to pursue higher office, Joseph said: "That's how it goes. If you fly early, you would be taken down early."

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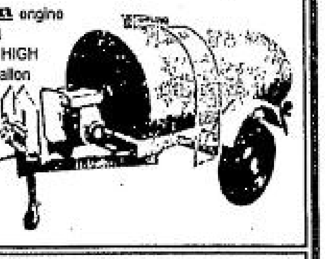

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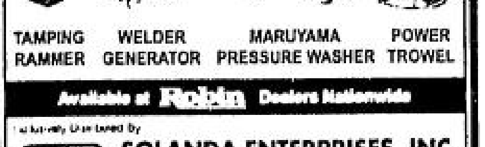

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Lakas mounting divisive campaign for Cha-cha

From page A1

frontation between Ms Arroyo and Ramos. The founding father of Lakas-CMD, Ramos was ominously quiet and did not contradict the claims by some party faithful of "unanimity" in the motion not to tamper with the President's term.

Ms Arroyo emerged from the caucus in a triumphant and belligerent mood, which did not seem justified by the outcome of the caucus. According to press reports, the caucus "unanimously" passed a motion not to touch her term.

Claims like these strengthen public perception that Lakas and party leaders are fixing things among themselves on such issues as constitutional revision.

From the President's mouth came these Delphic words: "We must achieve (constitutional change) by the middle of this year." She did not clarify what she meant, what sort of change she had in mind, and whether the election would be cancelled.

Speaker Jose de Venecia added to this obfuscation with the pompous statement that "we are on the eve of a historic six months. We will see a historic transition of the Philippines under the leadership of Lakas from a presidential form of government to a unicameral form of government."

No role for the people

If Lakas is engineering a "historic transformation" of the political system, it is doing it to the exclusion of public participation, as though constitutional change is the exclusive concern of a majority coalition.

The method by which Lakas seeks to make this transformation becomes more unsettling after Ms Arroyo urged her party mates to use "superior force" to realize Lakas' three priorities, revising the Constitution, sustaining gains in the economy, and easing poverty.

She urged the party to have "teamwork and discipline" in a fighting statement apparently to rouse the spirit of party members to battle in an expected revival of political hostilities over the contentious issues of constitutional change and threats from the opposition to file a new impeachment complaint.

Ramming Cha-cha through

"Steeled by bruising battles, we don't need additional training to win over our political foes in every round," Ms Arroyo said.

"We are the superior force. Our opponents must either toe the line of the national interest and fiscalize responsibly with statesmanship, or be relegated to the wayside of irrelevance or ignominy. With our heavy armory of democracy and legitimacy, we shall fight the squads of destabilizers and spoilers in the opposition."

The words "superior force" signal that the administration would not hesitate to use the Lakas machinery to ram through proposals to convene the House and the Senate into a constituent assembly to propose constitutional amendments, and to consider the draft constitution prepared by the Consultative Commission, which has proposed the cancellation of the 2007 election.

Flaw in the strategy

Both the constituent assembly proposition and the no-election scheme are highly contentious, and the first is fiercely opposed by the Senate.

This campaign for constitutional change rests on the House—where Lakas has a wieldy majority—for traction. Lakas demonstrated this power to crush moves to oust the President in the impeachment complaint last year. The quashing of the complaint blocked its transmittal the Senate for an impeachment trial.

The weakness of this strategy built on Lakas' firepower and manpower lies in that it is mounted on the back of the House and that it bypasses the cooperation of the Senate, whose compliance is essential for the success of the constitutional revision drive.

Division, not consensus

It is thus a divisive campaign. It does not lead to consensus.

The strangulation of the impeachment complaint in the House appears to have emboldened Ms Arroyo and given her false confidence that she could push constitutional revision unilaterally, or solely with House, or Lakas, assistance.

These initiatives stretch the stonewall tactic to the limit.

The dim prospect of Senate concurrence to the constituent assembly plan appears to have driven the administration to undertake another bypass operation, i.e., initiating a campaign for a people's initiative through the collection of the signatures of 12 percent of the registered voters on the resolution to amend the Constitution.

Distorting people power

This option may be resorted to if Congress refuses to sit as a constituent assembly or to call a constitutional convention.

Although the President has a reservoir of political allies among provincial officials and congressmen, any attempt to bypass the institutional process on Charter change represents a crude resurrection and a distortion of people power.

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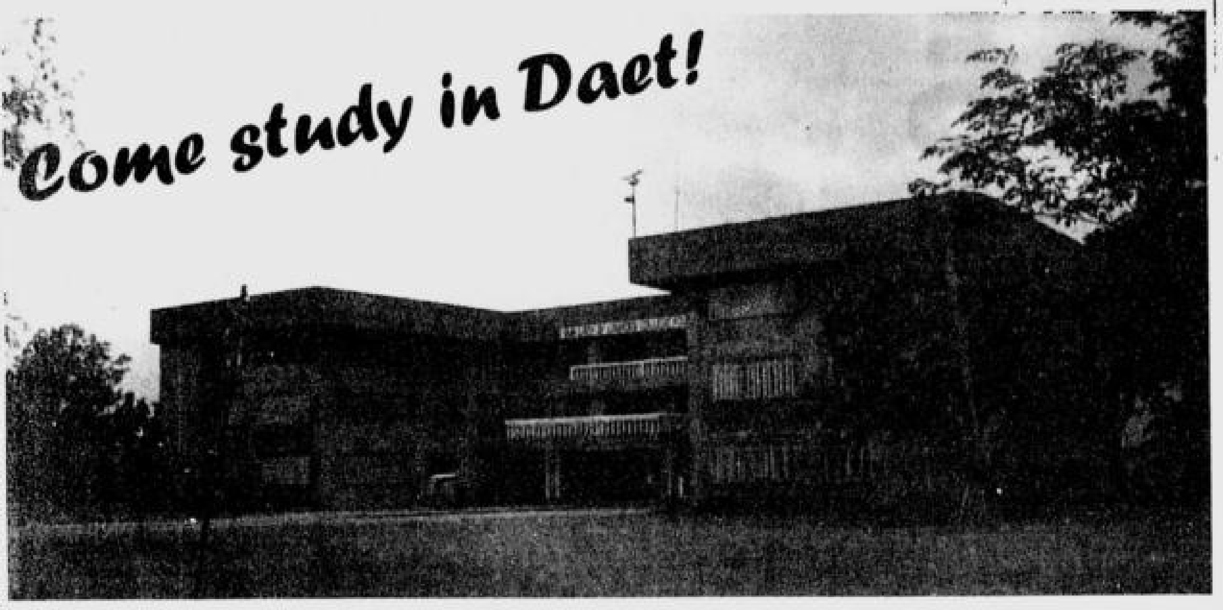

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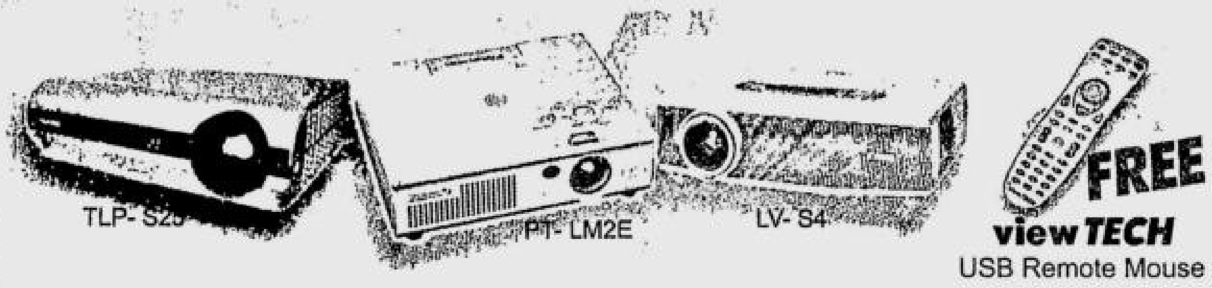

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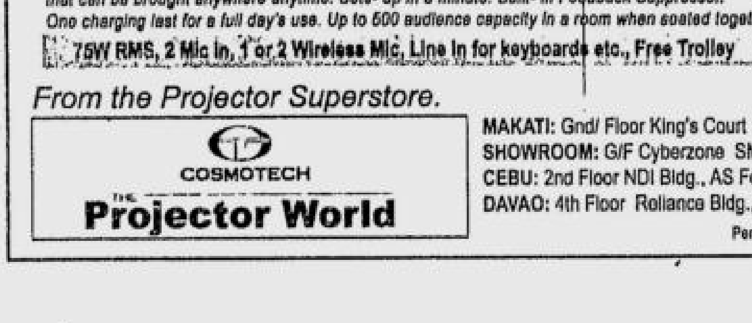

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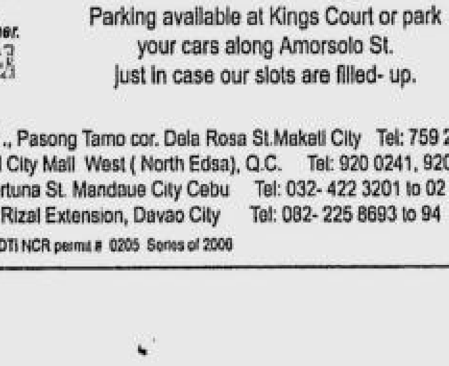

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NPAs free 9 comrades . . .

From page A1

As if that wasn't enough, four other inmates facing illegal drugs charges joined the mass breakout on Saturday night.

The rebel rescuers also took off with seven police pistols and a shotgun after locking up the guards in one of the cells.

"It was all over in four minutes. The helpless jail guards were not able to offer any resistance," communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal told the INQUIRER.

It was a black weekend for government forces.

In Samar, NPA rebels killed four soldiers and wounded eight others when they ambushed a convoy from the 801st Brigade in Motiong town at around 10 a.m., the military said.

The soldiers were returning from a medical-dental mission in a nearby town when a 30-strong guerrilla band fired on them in one of the bloodiest rebel attacks in weeks.

In the Batangas incident, the NPA raiders deceived the jail guards by showing up dressed in black fatigue military uniforms and telling the guards they had come to turn over custody of two prisoners.

"The duty guards really thought that the rebels were policemen. They even had two handcuffed men wearing orange shirts to make it appear that (the two were) prisoners," said Supt. Nilo Anzo, city police chief.

When the guards opened the gate, the rebels quickly disarmed them.

The jail lies about 500 meters from the city police station and 1 km from the provincial police headquarters.

Guards end up in jail

"It was definitely well-planned. In 15 minutes, the rebels escaped and got what they wanted," said Anzo. The raid occurred at around 7:45 p.m.

While some rebels were disarming jail officer in charge Leo Rabano in his office, others went to the prison cells for their comrades.

Inmates told investigators the rebels were shouting in Filipino, "Quick, those who are NPAs, get out," implying the detained rebels knew they would be rescued.

The surprised guards were tied up and locked in one of the cells.

The rebels fled in a pickup and three vans. One of the vehicles had a government license plate.

"This only proved that the Red fighters can launch special operations even in key cities and urban areas, contrary to the claim of the enemies that the NPA is now a spent force," Rosal said in a phone interview.

"Expect more tactical operations from the NPA."

In pursuit operations yesterday, members of the Philippine Air Force recovered assorted firearms and 30 land mines following gun battles with suspected rebels in two villages in Balayan, Batangas.

Anzo identified the escaped prisoners as Danilo Mayo, alias Benjamin de la Cruz, Reynaldo "Ka Abet" Rijano, Ronnie "Ka Joel" Ferrer, Noel Uybad, Elison Agnes, Marilou "Ka Johndel" Cataquiz, Lea Gaymay, Precy Balmes, Marian "Ka Jaira" Vibata and Cristituto "Ka Eloy" Galicia.

Ex-prisoners themselves

Mayo, Ferrer, Gaymay, Cataquiz, Balmes and Vibat were captured by government forces on a Batangas pier in 2004.

The escaped prisoners were facing charges of illegal possession of high-powered firearms and explosives.

The nine had been held in three different detention cells inside the provincial jail.

Three of the four nonrebel inmates who escaped were later recaptured.

Provincial jail warden Lutgardo Natanauan said some inmates who saw the attack told investigators that the rebel raiders were themselves former detainees at the provincial jail.

Guarding the coasts

"These NPAs were detained here a few years ago but were freed after posting bail," he said.

Chief Supt. Jesus Verzosa, Calabarzon police director, immediately raised the alert level in the entire region. He said checkpoints had been set up near the boundary of Batangas and Quezon provinces.

"But we are not discounting the possibility that the NPAs will escape toward the Mindoro islands. That's why we have also alerted the Coast Guard," Verzosa told the INQUIRER.

PNP Director General Arturo Lomibao arrived in this city yesterday morning to inspect the provincial jail and meet with law enforcement units.

Natanauan said he would not relieve any of his men despite the jailbreak.

"I think my men were not remiss in their job. They were just really tricked and deceived by the NPA," he said.

The one-hectare jail facility has a maximum capacity of 300 but holds more than 600 prisoners.

"The jail is really overcrowded. But we're doing our best to manage it properly and keep it secure," he said.

Some guards asleep

The jail has a total of 43 jail guards working different shifts.

When the raid happened, only five guards, including the duty officer, were at the facility.

Natanauan said there were actually three other guards at the jail during the attack. "But they were all asleep when the rebels attacked," he said.

Acting on a tip from residents, police conducted follow-up operations in the fishing villages of Barangay Wawa and Barangay Sta. Clara near the Batangas International Port after five speedboats were reportedly seen in the area.

Some members of the city police were busy with security preparations for the city fiesta today, officers said.

"The NPAs could have considered that in planning their attack," Anzo said.

UP student dies during hazing rites

By Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

CALAMBA CITY—AN AGRICULTURE ECOnomics student at the University of the Philippines at Los Baños died Saturday from severe physical injuries believed suffered during fraternity initiation rites at a resort in this city, police said yesterday.

SPO1 Gabriel Noguera, Calamba police investigator, identified the victim as Marlon Villanueva, 21, of Goodwill Subdivision in Parañaque City.

Police arrested two members of the Alpha Phi Omega fraternity chapter at UPLB who rushed the victim to a nearby hospital. They were identified as Jericho Paril, 25, of Meycauayan, Bulacan, and Brandon Gonzales, 22, of Calauan, Laguna.

The victim was apparently a neophyte, or candidate for membership in the fraternity, police said.

Noguera said police received a telephone call from the Jose P. Rizal Memorial Hospital in Barangay Halang after the victim was brought to the hospital by Paril and Gonzales at about 2:30 a.m.

He said the hospital staff suspected the victim had died from hazing.

He said police were awaiting the results of the autopsy done on Villanueva's remains which bore bruises on the thighs.

"The victim's body was badly beaten, it was black and blue," Noguera told the INQUIRER.

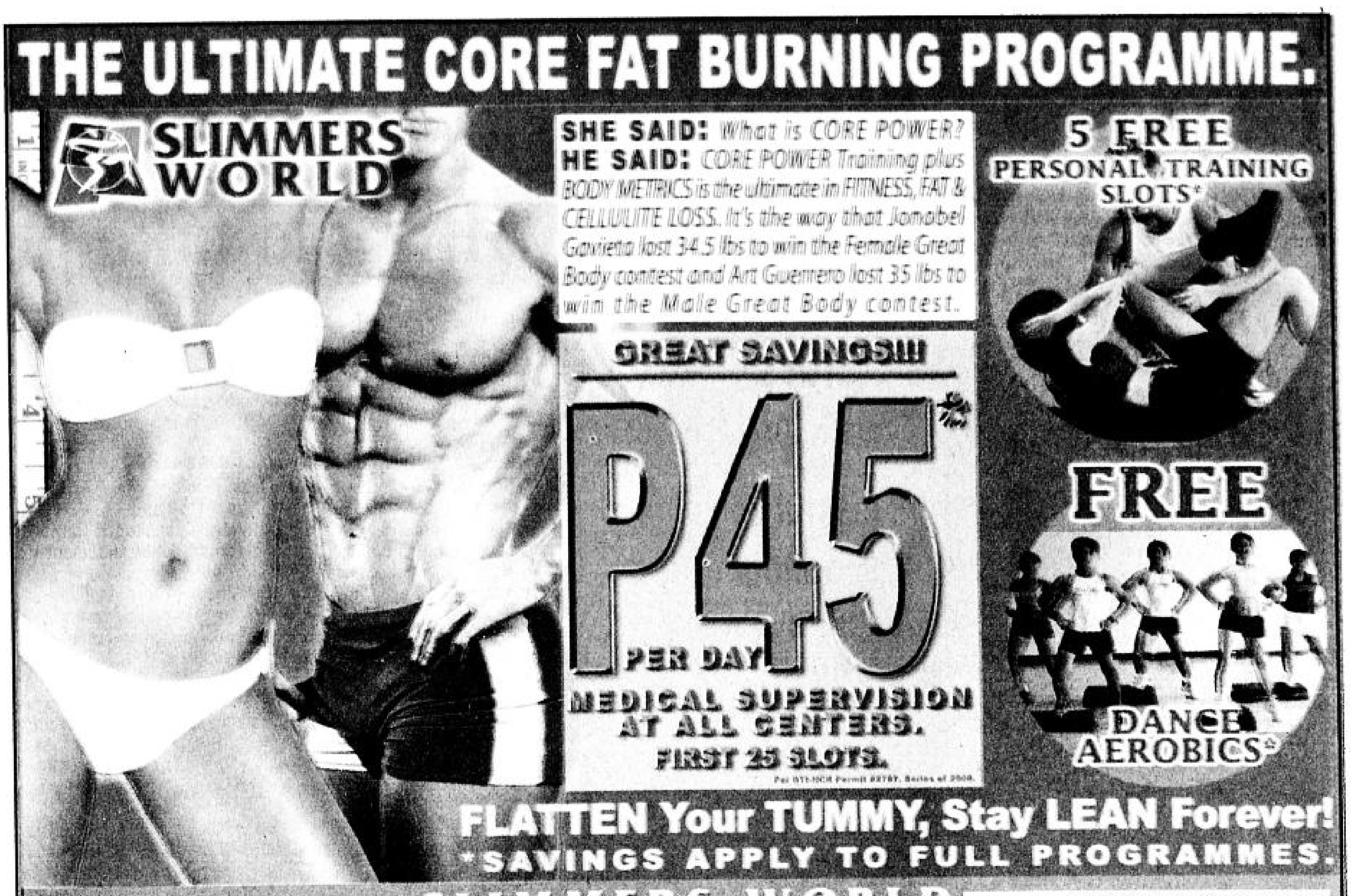
He said Paril and Gonzales refused to cooperate with investigators.

Noguera said the caretaker at Villa Novaliches Resort in Barangay Pansol here told investigators a group of about 20 male and female youths arrived at the place at around 9:30 p.m. on Friday.

"The caretaker saw nothing suspicious about the group and thought it was an ordinary [get-together] of students," he said.

The caretaker said the group hurriedly left the place at around 4 a.m.

After numerous hazing deaths in the past at different colleges and universities, many school officials banned fraternities, only to relent when the students promised to do away with violence during initiation rites. The Senate had also enacted a law banning hazing in all organizations.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Fugitive cop says he's sorry, willing to take punishment

By Luige A. del Puerto

HE WAS FEARED IN HIS PRIME.

But now at age 60, Rizal Alih, casts but a poor shadow of the renegade policeman who had led the raid on Camp Cawa-Cawa in Zamboanga City 16 years ago that left 14 people dead, including a military general and a colonel.

Alih was deported by Malaysian authorities to the Philippines on Saturday after he served eight of a 14-year jail term for illegal possession of firearms.

When he spoke with local reporters yesterday, Alih appeared subdued and remorseful; the fire had left his eyes. If anything, he said he was only glad to be alive.

Breaking into tears at least twice, Alih, who held the general and the colonel hostage during the siege of the camp, yesterday asked for forgiveness from the family of Brig. Gen. Eduardo Batalla and Col. Romeo Abendan who were killed in the botched rescue operation.

Misunderstanding

"I want to ask for forgiveness, but I do not know how to contact them," Alih told the reporters at the Philippine National Police-Custodial Center where he is detained.

Alih said his life no longer belonged to him but to the families of Batalla and Abendan and the other men who died because of his actions.

"I regret that Batalla died. It was an accident," he said. Alih recalled that he was called into Batalla's office. They had a misunderstanding, and the general was killed in the commotion that followed.

Like a father

"Whatever [punishment] they give me, I'm willing to accept it. Even if they kill me, I agree," he said in a mixture of Filipino and English.

Alih sobbed as he narrated how Abendan had been like a father to him. He was always at the official's house, running errands for the family, he said.

Escorted by Malaysian policemen, Alih arrived in the Philippines at 4:45 p.m. Saturday on board Malaysian Airlines from Kuala Lumpur.

A team of Filipino policemen waited for him at the airport to whisk him away to Camp Crame.

Disgruntled troops

Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao said Alih will be flown to Zamboanga to stand trial for the siege.

"He is charged with multiple murder for the siege," Lomibao said.

Alih fled to Malaysia in the early '90s after leading a small band of disgruntled policemen and soldiers in the takeover of Camp Cawa-Cawa, the regional headquarters of the Philippine Constabulary, in Zamboanga City in January 1989.

For three days, Alih's group held Batalla, then the regional commander, hostage. During the military assault, the camp burned down and 12 renegades and two hostages were killed.

Alih eluded a massive manhunt but was arrested in Malaysia in 1994 and convicted for illegal possession of weapons.

One of the young officers who stormed the camp shook hands with Alih yesterday.

"I'd like to ask forgiveness from you and your men," Alih told Sr. Supt. Manuel Gaerlan, then a second lieutenant and now chief of the Marikina City Police. Gaerlan lost his trigger finger and was wounded in the left hand during the assault.

"I have no personal remorse or anger with him. If he did what he believed in, I also did my duty. Personally, I have forgiven him," Gaerlan said.

Sneaked out of camp

Then Armed Forces chief of staff Renato de Villa was criticized for his hesitation in ordering an attack before Alih could kill his hostages.

Talking about his escape, Alih said he "sneaked out of the back of the camp."

He then commandeered a vehicle which took him to Campo Muslim in Zamboanga City. From there, he took on a pump boat to Basilan where he rented a twin-engine boat which took him to Sandakan, Malaysia, for P20,000.

With an AFP report

'Running priest' leads kids in Edsa protest

By Christian V. Esguerra

TRUE TO FORM, THE RUNNING priest didn't go quietly.

Fr. Robert Reyes, allegedly sacked for his criticism of the local Catholic Church hierarchy, yesterday led some 50 grade schoolers in a march from the Edsa Shrine to the nearby People Power Monument on Edsa.

His transfer last year by Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco took effect yesterday, the Feast of the Sto. Niño, ending the priest's stint at the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal parish in Project 4, Quezon City.

It was the second time in two years that Reyes had lost a parish. Before his transfer to Project 4, he had been assigned to the Parish of the Holy Sacrifice at UP Diliman.

The INQUIRER earlier reported that according to Fr. Aris Sison, spokesperson of the Diocese of Cubao, Reyes had opted to take a sabbatical after his last assignment.

Apparently unfazed by what he called "a form of subtle rebuke," he organized the afternoon march of children who had lost their homes in a fire in his parish on Dec. 26.

At the People Power Monument where Reyes observed several months of fasting last year, the children wrote letters to President Macapagal-Arroyo and members of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

The President and the bishops have been the focus of Reyes' wrath: Ms Arroyo for allegedly cheating her way to power, and the bishops for purportedly not doing enough to condemn the immorality and illegitimacy of her administration.

The letters generally asked Ms Arroyo to "stop lying, pretending and scandalizing" the children, allegedly for continuing to hide the truth about her alleged manipulation of the 2004 election.

The children asked the bishops to "teach us right and wrong, guide us to the right path, and inspire us to believe in the future."

According to Reyes, they will personally deliver the letters to Malacañang and the CBCP office in Intramuros, Manila, today.

Told that he might be accused of using the children for his advocacy, he replied: "Never mind if I'm accused of instigating them. These people and their parents just want to air their grievances."

Amid discussions on changing the Constitution supposedly for the good of the country, Reyes said the poor and their sentiments were often unheard.

"Let's not marginalize the poor who comprise 80 percent of our population," he told the INQUIRER.

In the case of the children and their families, what's needed is a decent relocation site. Since the fire, a total of 273 families out of the 500 that lost their homes have been staying at a covered court in Barangay Escopa, he said.

About five days ago, he said, the families became enraged when the local government took away the portable toilets in the area.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 16, 2006
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1st Reading: 1 S 15:16-23
Gospel: Mark 2:18-22

One day, when the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees were fasting, some people asked Jesus, "Why is it that both the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but yours do not?" Jesus answered, "How can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the day will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them and on that day they will fast.

No one sews a piece of new cloth on an old coat, because the new patch will shrink and tear away from the old cloth, making a worse tear. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, for the wine would burst the skins and then both the wine and the skins would be lost. But new wine, new skins!"

Commentary

Saul disobeys the Lord, greedy for his own kingship rather than the honor of God. God does not want sacrifice of animals, but submission and obedience and so God rejects Saul as the ruler of Israel. This is the history of Israel centuries before Jesus but the seeds are sown early that God does not want sacrifice of animals, or human beings, children or our enemies, or fasts. And in Jesus we discover something new: that we are guests with Jesus at the wedding feast of God, a new people in a new covenant. We are a new cloak of compassion to throw over the world. We are new wine that will bring life to all. And this life, this Spirit is poured into us in baptism where we promise to live as Jesus did before God.

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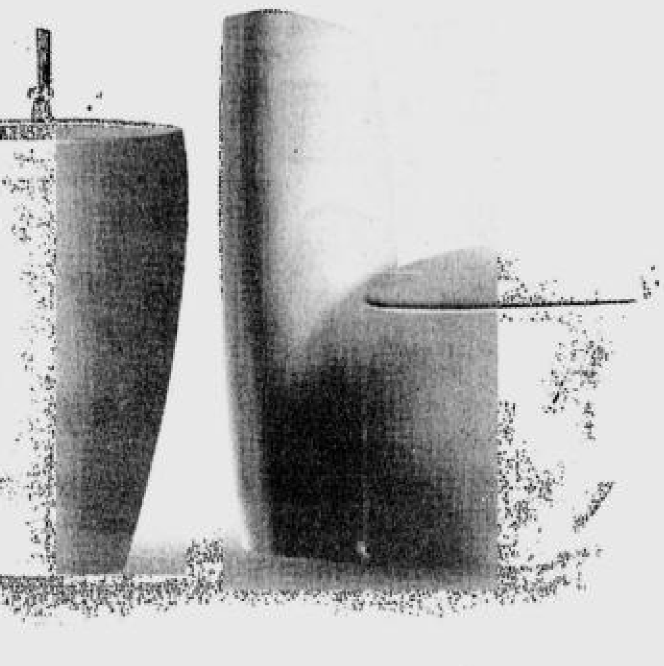

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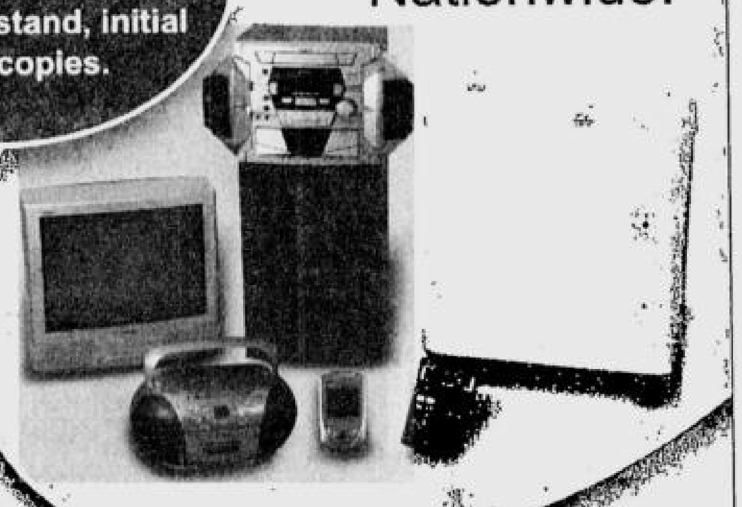

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8. To claim prize, winners must present the customer's copy of purchase invoice (photocopy not acceptable), valid I. D. with photo, and registered notice. The invoice amount must be fully paid prior to release of prize. Metro Manila winners can claim their prizes from the e-Copy main office located at 5837 Zobel Roxas St., Makati City. Provincial winners, can claim their prizes from the authorized dealer where the winners conducted the trade-in transaction.
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Health pros score med tourism

By Christian V. Esguerra

NOTWITHSTANDING THE ROSY FORECASTS of a booming medical tourism market in the country, not everyone is upbeat about its impact on the public health sector.

Touted as a viable solution to the country's worsening health crisis, the medical tourism program envisions hordes of foreigners coming to the Philippines for medical treatment they could not otherwise afford in their own countries.

But Philippine hospital workers are not convinced that medical tourism would solve the health sector crisis spawned by budgetary constraints and the exodus of health workers for higher paying jobs abroad.

The employees' unions in all but one major government hospital in Metro Manila have scheduled a huge gathering on Wednesday to tackle the new program.

The unions which belong to the Alliance of Health Workers are not optimistic that medical tourism is the answer.

"It's just a cosmetic measure to make it appear that the government is really doing something to solve the problem," Jossel Ebesate, the group's secretary general, told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Ebesate was appalled that the program was offering world-class health care to foreigners while leaving local patients, particularly the poor, to substandard treatment.

He said the group was not convinced that revenues from medical tourism would be used to help the local health care system get back on its feet.

The gathering, dubbed the Council of Leaders Meeting, will include employees' unions from all government hospitals in the National Capital Region, except for the East Avenue Medical Center. It will be held at the National Children's Hospital on E. Rodriguez Avenue in Quezon City.

During the medical tourism program's launching last Wednesday, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said the greatest challenge was "to transform economic gains from revenues by health tourism into benefits that will be felt by our people."

"We have to constantly ask—for who are cost-effective services to be provided?" he said in his speech.

Duque later told reporters that the plan was to use the earnings from medical tourism to expand charity services in the public hospitals, essentially by expanding bed capacity for the poor.

Ebesate and his group remain unconvinced, saying the same strategy had been done before but with very few results.

To save the supposedly collapsing health system, he said the salaries and benefits of health professionals must be increased.

He said crucial to this strategy would be the full implementation of the 1992 Magna Carta for Health Workers and the Nursing Law of 2002 which sets the salary of government nurses at between P9,939 and P13,300 a month.

Such a move would send a strong signal that the government was not leaving its health workers out in the cold, he said.

Signature drive on to shut down Rapu-Rapu mine

THE FISHERFOLK OF BICOL WILL BE CASTING for signatures this week as they kick off a campaign to have the Lafayette mine on Rapu-Rapu Island in Albay closed permanently.

Members of Lakas Mangingisda ng Bicol (Lambat-Bicol) hope to gather at least 5,000 signatures from residents in the adversely affected municipalities of the region, church groups and environmental advocates pushing for the shutdown of the mine said.

The signature campaign will start in Rapu-Rapu, site of two mine spills that caused fish kills last year, and the towns of Gubat, Prieto-Diaz and Barcelona in Sorsogon province.

"We intend to get a significant number of signatures ... to inform (the government) that the people are demanding the pullout of Lafayette, and that the government and Lafayette should be jointly held accountable for the mining disaster," the leaders of Lambat-Bicol, an affiliate of the militant fisherfolk alliance Pamalakaya, said in a statement yesterday.

The fishermen are demanding the cancellation of the mining permit of Australian firm Lafayette Mining Inc., which operates the P10.4-billion Rapu-Rapu Polymetallic Project.

The project has been ballyhooed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources as the flagship project of the revived mining industry in the Philippines.

Lafayette, however, failed to prevent two mine spills on Oct. 11 and Oct. 31 last year. Effluents containing high levels of cyanide were released from tailing dams into adjacent bodies of water, causing fish kills in the coastal community.

Pamalakaya chair Fernando Hicap said the signatures would be submitted to the DENR, the Office of the President and the Australian Embassy in Manila before Congress starts its investigation into the mine spills.

The DENR has fined Lafayette P10.7 million, the biggest penalty imposed on any mining firm in the country so far, for violating the Clean Water Act and the firm's own environmental compliance certificate.

Blanche S. Rivera

'Coast is clear' after DENR amends order

By Blanche S. Rivera

STRONG OPPOSITION, PARTICULARLY from small fishermen, has prompted the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to draft a new order to amend the controversial administrative order allowing the 25-year lease of coastal areas to big investors and local governments.

The DENR is set to limit the areas for lease to depleted mangrove forests and also limit the income-generating activities that could be conducted at the investment sites following consultations with marine scientists.

The new AO, which adopts the suggestions of the scientists, is set to be issued within 30 days.

"Secretary (Michael) Defensor has listened to them. We're already revising the AO based on their observations. His (Defensor) concern really was the conservation of mangrove areas," Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau director Virgilio Vitug told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

"We adopted almost all, maybe 75-90 percent of their (scientists') suggestions. We are not favoring commercial use. It's not for big businessmen, the intention is to protect," Vitug said.

Defensor and other DENR officials have been meeting with noted marine scientists like Jurgenne Primavera and other members of the Philippine Association of Marine Science since last month.

The PAWB director said the DENR may limit the income-generating activities allowed at the mangrove sites to aquasilviculture, but this was still being discussed.

On Nov. 17, 2005, Defensor signed Department Administrative Order 24 which allows for a 25-year lease of "idle and degraded" portions of the country's 266,000 sq km of coastal areas for development, alongside reforestation requirements. The lease would be renewable for another 25 years.

The DAO 24 permits aquasilviculture, pearl farming, mud crab fattening and other non-extractive enterprises in the coastal areas.

Under the DAO, the DENR would have received three percent of the profits from the investments.

Fisherfolk and marine scientists, however, scored the DAO 24, saying it would pave the way for big businesses to take over coastal resources, displacing the country's 1.8 million small fishermen who have first rights to municipal waters.

The fisheries sector is a major source of food and livelihood in the Philippines, where about 900 coastal municipalities depend largely on small-scale fishing.

The Philippine Association of Marine Science said municipal fishers were already the poorest among the fisheries sectors, contributing only 29 percent of total fisheries production in 2003 compared to 40 percent from aquaculture and 31 percent from commercial fisheries.

"Thus, granting the business sector 25-year permits to plots of 5-10 hectares or more in the traditional fishing grounds of municipal fishers will push this already marginalized sector beyond the edge of poverty into the abyss of despair, frustration and social unrest," a PAMS letter addressed to Defensor in November said.

The scientists also said mangrove reforestation would eventually yield bigger incomes for the communities as the value of goods and services that could be derived from mangroves in their natural state could reach $10,000.

Defensor, however, has cancelled some community-based forest management agreements covering mangrove areas and held by people's organizations that were performing well.

The Tambuyog Development Center said the CBFMA awarded to one of its affiliate community organizations in Cebu had been cancelled despite the planting of 30,000 propagules in five years and a satisfactory evaluation.

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Angry Pakistan says hit missed Zawahiri

ISLAMABAD—A DINNER INVITATION TO Al-Qaida's second-in-command triggered a US airstrike in Pakistan's tribal region but Ayman al-Zawahiri failed to show up, Pakistani intelligence officials said on Sunday.

Pakistan condemned Friday's strike, which killed at least 18 people, including women and children, and summoned US Ambassador Ryan Crocker to protest. Thousands of local tribesmen also rallied near the scene, chanting anti-American slogans.

The foreign ministry said on Saturday that foreigners had been near the village of Damadola in the Bajaur region bordering Afghanistan and were the probable target.

Pakistani intelligence officials said they were checking reports up to seven foreign militants had been killed and their bodies removed by local supporters. But they said there were no indications Osama bin Laden's deputy, Zawahiri, was there.

"He was invited for the dinner, but we have no evidence he was present," a senior intelligence official said.

Al Arabiya television quoted a source it said had contact with al-Qaida saying Zawahiri was alive.

The US government has not commented, but US sources familiar with the operation said it was too early to determine his fate and the remains of the dead would have to be examined to determine whether Zawahiri was among them.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the issue's sensitive nature, said the airstrike was carried out on the basis of "very good" intelligence indicating Zawahiri was at the targeted location.

Another Pakistani intelligence official said two local Islamist clerics, known for harboring al-Qaida militants, had attended the dinner but left hours before the airstrike at 3 a.m.

The US sources said CIA-operated unmanned drones were believed to have been used in the attack. A Pakistani intelligence official said four missiles had been fired.

Washington has offered $25 million each for Zawahiri and Bin Laden, who have been on the run since US-led forces toppled Afghanistan's Taliban rulers in 2001 after the Sept. 11 attacks.

The two have long been thought to be hiding along the Afghan-Pakistan border under the protection of Pashtun tribes.

The angry reaction to the strike comes just days after Pakistan, an important ally in the US-led war on terrorism, lodged a strong protest with US-led forces in Afghanistan, saying cross-border firing in a nearby tribal area last weekend had killed eight people.

Zawahiri is seen as the brains behind al-Qaida and has been its public face, denouncing the United States in repeated video messages, the most recent of which was broadcast this month. *Reuters*

NOTICE TO MAYNILAD WATER CUSTOMERS AND THE PUBLIC
NEW WATER RATES FOR THE WEST ZONE

Effective 1 February 2006, Maynilad Water Services, Inc. will implement a rate/tariff adjustment as approved by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System Regulatory Office per Resolution No. 05-008-CA dated 22 December 2005, and confirmed by the MWSS per Board Resolution No. 2005-296 dated 28 December 2005.

The MWSI presently serves the West Zone which consists of the following areas: The cities of Manila (all but portions of San Andres & Sta. Ana), Quezon (west of San Juan River, West Ave., EDSA, Congressional & Mindanao Ave.,: the northern part starting from Districts of the Holy Spirit & Batasan Hills), Makati, west of South Bacoor, Imus, Kawit, Noveleta and Rosario - all in Cavite province.

The new schedule of water tariff for all MWSI customers effective February 1, 2006 is as follows:

1. WATER CHARGES	Effective Until January 31, 2006				Effective on February 1, 2006			
	A. BASIC	B. CERA*	C. STM	TOTAL	A. BASIC	B. CERA*	C. FCDA/STM**	TOTAL
RESIDENTIAL								
First 10 cu.m.	₱ 66.39 /conn.	₱ 10.00 /conn.	₱ 14.28 /conn.	₱ 90.67 /conn.	₱ 71.10 /conn	₱ 10.00 /conn.	₱ 15.53 /conn.	₱ 96.63 /conn.
Next 10 cu.m.	8.10 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	1.74 /cu.m.	10.84 /cu.m.	8.68 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	1.90 /cu.m.	11.58 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	15.41 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	3.31 /cu.m.	19.72 /cu.m.	16.50 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	3.60 /cu.m.	21.10 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	20.24 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	4.35 /cu.m.	25.59 /cu.m.	21.68 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	4.74 /cu.m.	27.42 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	23.65 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.09 /cu.m.	29.74 /cu.m.	25.33 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.54 /cu.m.	31.87 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	24.72 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.32 /cu.m.	31.04 /cu.m.	26.48 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.78 /cu.m.	33.26 /cu.m.
Next 50 cu.m.	25.85 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.56 /cu.m.	32.41 /cu.m.	27.69 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.05 /cu.m.	34.74 /cu.m.
Next 50 cu.m.	27.01 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.81 /cu.m.	33.82 /cu.m.	28.93 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.31 /cu.m.	36.24 /cu.m.
Over 200 cu.m.	28.15 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.05 /cu.m.	35.20 /cu.m.	30.15 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.58 /cu.m.	37.73 /cu.m.
SEMI-BUSINESS								
First 10 cu.m.	₱ 111.52 /conn.	₱ 10.00 /conn.	₱ 23.98 /conn.	₱ 145.50 /conn	₱ 119.44 /conn	₱ 10.00 /conn	₱ 26.09 /conn.	₱ 155.53 /conn.
Next 10 cu.m.	13.61 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	2.93 /cu.m.	17.54 /cu.m.	14.58 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	3.18 /cu.m.	18.76 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	16.77 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	3.61 /cu.m.	21.38 /cu.m.	17.96 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	3.92 /cu.m.	22.88 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	21.26 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	4.57 /cu.m.	26.83 /cu.m.	22.77 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	4.97 /cu.m.	28.74 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	24.72 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.32 /cu.m.	31.04 /cu.m.	26.48 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.78 /cu.m.	33.26 /cu.m.
Next 20 cu.m.	25.88 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.57 /cu.m.	32.45 /cu.m.	27.72 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.06 /cu.m.	34.78 /cu.m.
Next 50 cu.m.	27.01 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	5.81 /cu.m.	33.82 /cu.m.	28.93 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.31 /cu.m.	36.24 /cu.m.
Next 50 cu.m.	28.15 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.05 /cu.m.	35.20 /cu.m.	30.15 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.58 /cu.m.	37.73 /cu.m.
Over 200 cu.m.	29.26 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.29 /cu.m.	36.55 /cu.m.	31.34 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.85 /cu.m.	39.19 /cu.m.
BUSINESS GROUP I								
First 10 cu.m.	₱ 301.72 /conn.	₱ 10.00 /conn.	₱ 64.88 /conn.	₱ 376.60 /conn.	₱ 323.14 /conn.	₱ 10.00 /conn.	₱ 70.58 /conn	₱ 403.72 /conn.
Next 90 cu.m.	30.31 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.52 /cu.m.	37.83 /cu.m.	32.46 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.09 /cu.m.	40.55 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	30.40 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.54 /cu.m.	37.94 /cu.m.	32.56 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.11 /cu.m.	40.67 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	30.49 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.56 /cu.m.	38.05 /cu.m.	32.65 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.14 /cu.m.	40.79 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	30.59 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.58 /cu.m.	38.17 /cu.m.	32.76 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.16 /cu.m.	40.92 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	30.69 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.60 /cu.m.	38.29 /cu.m.	32.87 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.18 /cu.m.	41.05 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	30.85 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.63 /cu.m.	38.48 /cu.m.	33.04 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.21 /cu.m.	41.25 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	30.97 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.66 /cu.m.	38.63 /cu.m.	33.17 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.25 /cu.m.	41.42 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	31.06 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.68 /cu.m.	38.74 /cu.m.	33.27 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.27 /cu.m.	41.54 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	31.18 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.70 /cu.m.	38.88 /cu.m.	33.39 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.29 /cu.m.	41.68 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	31.26 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.72 /cu.m.	38.98 /cu.m.	33.48 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.31 /cu.m.	41.79 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	31.42 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.76 /cu.m.	39.18 /cu.m.	33.65 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.35 /cu.m.	42.00 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	31.51 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.78 /cu.m.	39.29 /cu.m.	33.75 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.37 /cu.m.	42.12 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	31.65 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.81 /cu.m.	39.46 /cu.m.	33.90 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.40 /cu.m.	42.30 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m	31.75 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.83 /cu.m.	39.58 /cu.m.	34.00 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.43 /cu.m.	42.43 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	31.84 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.85 /cu.m.	39.69 /cu.m.	34.10 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.45 /cu.m.	42.55 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	31.92 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.86 /cu.m.	39.78 /cu.m.	34.19 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.47 /cu.m.	42.66 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	32.10 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.90 /cu.m.	40.00 /cu.m.	34.38 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.51 /cu.m.	42.89 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	32.20 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.92 /cu.m.	40.12 /cu.m.	34.49 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.54 /cu.m.	43.03 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	32.32 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.95 /cu.m.	40.27 /cu.m.	34.61 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.56 /cu.m.	43.17 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	32.37 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.96 /cu.m.	40.33 /cu.m.	34.67 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.57 /cu.m.	43.24 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	32.51 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	6.99 /cu.m.	40.50 /cu.m.	34.82 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.60 /cu.m.	43.42 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	32.65 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.02 /cu.m.	40.67 /cu.m.	34.97 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.64 /cu.m.	43.61 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	32.74 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.04 /cu.m.	40.78 /cu.m.	35.06 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.66 /cu.m.	43.72 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	32.86 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.07 /cu.m.	40.93 /cu.m.	35.19 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.68 /cu.m.	43.87 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	32.98 /cu.m	1.00 /cu.m.	7.09 /cu.m.	41.07 /cu.m.	35.32 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.71 /cu.m.	44.03 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	33.06 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.11 /cu.m.	41.17 /cu.m.	35.41 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.74 /cu.m.	44.15 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	33.19 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.14 /cu.m.	41.33 /cu.m.	35.55 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m	7.77 /cu.m.	44.32 /cu.m
Next 500 cu.m.	33.31 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.16 /cu.m.	41.47 /cu.m.	35.68 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m	7.79 /cu.m.	44.47 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	33.43 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.19 /cu.m.	41.62 /cu.m.	35.80 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.81 /cu.m.	44.61 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	33.55 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.21 /cu.m.	41.76 /cu.m.	35.93 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m	7.85 /cu.m.	44.78 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	33.64 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.23 /cu.m.	41.87 /cu.m.	36.03 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.87 /cu.m.	44.90 /cu.m.
Over 10000 cu.m.	33.77 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.26 /cu.m.	42.03 /cu.m.	36.17 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.90 /cu.m.	45.07 /cu.m.
BUSINESS GROUP II								
First 10 cu.m.	₱ 326.48 /conn.	₱ 10.00 /conn.	₱ 70.20 /conn.	₱ 406.68 /conn.	₱ 349.66 /conn.	₱ 10.00 /conn.	₱ 76.38 /conn.	₱ 436.04 /conn.
Next 90 cu.m.	32.86 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.07 /cu.m.	40.93 /cu.m.	35.19 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.68 /cu.m.	43.87 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	33.06 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.11 /cu.m.	41.17 /cu.m.	35.41 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.74 /cu.m.	44.15 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	33.31 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.16 /cu.m.	41.47 /cu.m.	35.68 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.79 /cu.m.	44.47 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	33.55 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.21 /cu.m.	41.76 /cu.m.	35.93 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.85 /cu.m.	44.78 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	33.77 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.26 /cu.m.	42.03 /cu.m.	36.17 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.90 /cu.m.	45.07 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	34.00 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.31 /cu.m.	42.31 /cu.m.	36.41 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.95 /cu.m.	45.36 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	34.22 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.36 /cu.m.	42.58 /cu.m.	36.65 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.00 /cu.m.	45.65 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	34.43 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.40 /cu.m.	42.83 /cu.m.	36.87 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.05 /cu.m.	45.92 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	34.67 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.46 /cu.m.	43.13 /cu.m.	37.13 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.11 /cu.m.	46.24 /cu.m.
Next 100 cu.m.	34.88 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.50 /cu.m.	43.38 /cu.m.	37.36 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.16 /cu.m.	46.52 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	35.11 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.55 /cu.m.	43.66 /cu.m.	37.60 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.21 /cu.m.	46.81 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	35.32 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.60 /cu.m.	43.92 /cu.m.	37.83 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.26 /cu.m.	47.09 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	35.58 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.65 /cu.m.	44.23 /cu.m.	38.11 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.33 /cu.m.	47.44 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	35.77 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.69 /cu.m.	44.46 /cu.m.	38.31 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.37 /cu.m.	47.68 /cu.m.
Next 200 cu.m.	36.01 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.74 /cu.m.	44.75 /cu.m.	38.57 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.43 /cu.m.	48.00 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	36.25 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.80 /cu.m.	45.05 /cu.m.	38.82 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.48 /cu.m.	48.30 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	36.44 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.84 /cu.m.	45.28 /cu.m.	39.03 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.53 /cu.m.	48.56 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	36.67 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.89 /cu.m.	45.56 /cu.m.	39.27 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.58 /cu.m.	48.85 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	36.93 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.94 /cu.m.	45.87 /cu.m.	39.55 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.64 /cu.m.	49.19 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.12 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	7.98 /cu.m.	46.10 /cu.m.	39.76 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.68 /cu.m.	49.44 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.38 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.04 /cu.m.	46.42 /cu.m.	40.03 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.75 /cu.m.	49.78 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.58 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.08 /cu.m.	46.66 /cu.m.	40.25 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.79 /cu.m.	50.04 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	37.79 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.13 /cu.m.	46.92 /cu.m.	40.47 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.84 /cu.m.	50.31 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	38.03 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.18 /cu.m.	47.21 /cu.m.	40.73 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.89 /cu.m.	50.62 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	38.28 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.23 /cu.m.	47.51 /cu.m.	41.00 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.96 /cu.m.	50.96 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	38.47 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.27 /cu.m.	47.74 /cu.m.	41.20 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	9.00 /cu.m.	51.20 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	38.74 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.33 /cu.m.	48.07 /cu.m.	41.49 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	9.06 /cu.m.	51.55 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	38.93 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.37 /cu.m.	48.30 /cu.m.	41.69 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	9.10 /cu.m.	51.79 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	39.18 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.43 /cu.m.	48.61 /cu.m.	41.96 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	9.16 /cu.m.	52.12 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	39.38 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.47 /cu.m.	48.85 /cu.m.	42.18 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	9.21 /cu.m.	52.39 /cu.m.
Next 500 cu.m.	39.63 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.52 /cu.m.	49.15 /cu.m.	42.44 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	9.27 /cu.m.	52.71 /cu.m.
Over 10000 cu.m.	39.83 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	8.56 /cu.m.	49.39 /cu.m.	42.66 /cu.m.	1.00 /cu.m.	9.32 /cu.m.	52.98 /cu.m.

Note:* *Shall be subjected to a charge of 1 Peso per cubic meter of actual water consumption if consumption is below ten (10) cubic meters.*

** *The FCDA, a percentage of the basic charge, is based on a quarterly review and adjustment consistent with the no-over, no-under principle pursuant to Amendment No. 1 of the Concession Agreement*

2. A. ENVIRONMENTAL CHARGE (EC) - 10% of Water Charge

B. SEWERAGE CHARGE (SC) - 50% of Water Charge
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3. MAINTENANCE SERVICE CHARGE (MSC)

METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per conn.)	METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per conn.)	METER SIZE	AMOUNT (per conn.)
1/2" or 13mm	₱ 1.50	1 1/4" or 40mm	₱ 4.00	4" or 100 mm	₱ 20.00
3/4" or 20mm	2.00	2" or 50mm	6.00	6" or 150 mm	35.00
1" or 25mm	3.00	3" or 75mm	10.00	8" or 200 mm	50.00

4. VALUE-ADDED TAX (VAT) 10% of the Charges 1, 2 and 3
(NOTE: Further adjustments shall be made if the VAT is increased to 12% pursuant to the Supreme Court ruling on the EVAT)

THE MONTHLY BILL IS THE SUM OF 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Approved by:

EDUARDO C SANTOS
Chief Regulator, MWSS-RO

MACRA A. CRUZ
Acting MWSS Administrator

FIORELLO R. ESTUAR
MWSI - President

SILENCED—Iranian female musicians perform in Iran's National Music Orchestra during Iran's 21th Fajr International Music Festival, in Tehran, Jan. 14. Hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has banned all Western music from Iran's state radio and TV stations—an eerie reminder of the 1979 Islamic revolution when popular music was outlawed as "un-Islamic" under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. AP

Iran: UN Council threat will not end nuke plans

TEHRAN—A DEFIANT IRANIAN President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed Saturday his country would not back down to Western demands it limit its disputed nuclear program, even if ordered to do so by the UN Security Council.

"Even if the Security Council becomes involved, it will not help resolve the issue. We are not interested in going down this path, but if some people insist on depriving the Iranian people of their rights they should know that such a thing will not happen," the hardliner told a news conference.

"Naturally, our nation will not accept anything imposed on it. It is our definitive right to have nuclear technology."

He was speaking amid an escalating standoff with the international community, which has warned that it could haul Iran before the Security Council after Tehran resumed sensitive nuclear activities this week.

EU, US, Chinese and Russian officials are due to hold unprecedented talks on the crisis in London on Monday, when they are expected to set a date for an emergency meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation board of governors.

While stopping short of talking of sanctions and insisting military action is not on the cards, both the EU and the United States are pushing for a referral to New York over what they fear is a covert weapons drive.

They are hoping this would back up a series of IAEA calls—so far ignored—for Tehran to return to a full freeze of fuel cycle work.

Iran, which has threatened to halt cooperation with the IAEA, insists it only wants to use nuclear technology to generate electricity—but there are widespread fears the clerical regime could divert fuel cycle technology to acquire a nuclear arsenal.

But when asked if oil and gas-rich Iran could use its vast energy reserves as a tool in the dispute, Ahmadinejad replied his nation also has "leverage" of its own to defend its national interests.

"They confront us and deal with us in a very harsh and illegal language, but ultimately they need us more than we need them," Ahmadinejad said at only his second news conference since his shock election win last June.

Iran, he insisted, was a "civilized nation" that "does not need nuclear weapons."

"Despite the technological progress in the world, a few Western countries are mentally living in mediaeval times and say you don't have the right to scientific progress," he fumed, saying "the time has passed for the language of bullying, domination and relying on your nuclear, chemical and biological weapons." *AFP*

Top Peru tribunal upholds Fujimori's disqualification

LIMA—THE TOP ELECTORAL tribunal in Peru on Saturday upheld a decision by election organizers to bar former President Alberto Fujimori from running in this year's presidential contest.

The ruling came after a lawyer for Fujimori appealed the decision by Peru's electoral board to disqualify him from running in the April 9 polls.

Fujimori, 67, wants to seek a fourth term in power even though he is detained in Chile, where he faces possible extradition, and is officially banned from seeking public office in Peru until 2010.

Fujimori led Peru for a decade before fleeing to Japan in 2000, amid mounting accusations of human rights abuses and corruption. He showed up unexpectedly in Chile in November and was promptly detained at Peru's request.

Peruvian authorities are seeking his extradition, citing charges that he corrupted officials and oversaw abductions, homicides and torture during his presidency.

Fujimori insists he is innocent and is the victim of political persecution.

While he remains a controversial figure in Peru, an opinion poll in November showed he had sufficient support to qualify for a second-round run-off election against the top vote-getter Lourdes Flores if he were allowed to run.

But more recent surveys show that the conservative Flores and populist Ollanto Humala are now tied at the head of the field of 24 candidates. *AFP*

Kuwait's ailing Emir Jaber dies

KUWAIT—KUWAITI EMIR SHEIKH Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, ruler of the tiny Gulf oil-producing state and a US ally, died on Sunday after a long illness, state media reported. He was 78.

Under the constitution, Crown Prince Sheikh Saad al-Abdulla al-Sabah, 76, will become emir.

But because illness has incapacitated Saad, political analysts expect Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah to effectively run the country—a role he has played over the past four years.

The illness in the past few years of both Jaber and Saad had sparked concerns at home and abroad over who would rule the Opec nation, which sits on one-tenth of the world's oil reserves and was the main launchpad for the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq.

"With the utmost of sorrow and sadness, the (royal court) announces to the Kuwaiti people, the Arab and Islamic nations and the peoples of friendly world nations the death of His Highness Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah," said a royal court statement carried by the state news agency KUNA.

It said the emir, who had ruled Kuwait since Dec. 31, 1977, "passed away at dawn on Sunday."

Jaber had been ailing since suffering a brain hemorrhage in 2001. He had surgery on his leg in the United States in May.

Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's troops occupied Kuwait for seven months before US-led forces ousted them in 1991 Gulf War.

The emir returned from exile in Saudi Arabia to lead the rebuilding of a land scarred by killings, torture and brutal rule during the occupation. He also oversaw the rehabilitation of oilfields set on fire by retreating Iraqi troops.

Kuwait said there would be a 40-day official period of mourning and that government offices would be closed for three days from Sunday.

SHEIK Jaber in February 1997 photo. AP

The emir was the 13th ruler of a 245-year-old dynasty that has ruled Kuwait since the Anaiza tribe, to which the al-Sabahs belonged, migrated from the Arabian hinterland.

Since the fall of Saddam in neighboring Iraq in 2003 and US calls for change in the Middle East, the ruling family had come under intense pressure from both Islamists and pro-Western liberals to loosen its grip on the government and share power.

The ruling family has also been under pressure from parliament and elders within its ranks to break with tradition and replace the ailing crown prince.

The succession process alternates between the two branches of the ruling family—al-Jabers and al-Salems.

Kuwait, a founder Opec member, enjoys one of the world's highest standards of living, despite its reliance on oil exports, unpredictable oil income and huge losses from the 1990-1991 Iraq occupation.

It hosts up to 30,000 US troops and some 13,000 US citizens live in the country. *Reuters*

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SHELLEY Winters in undated photograph. REUTERS

US actress Shelley Winters dies at 85

LOS ANGELES—ACTRESS SHELLEY WINTERS, the two-time Oscar winner whose roles ranged from glamour girls to tramps, died at a Southern California nursing home early on Saturday, a spokesperson said. She was 85.

Winters died at the Rehabilitation Center of Beverly Hills about 6:15 a.m., a spokesperson there said.

She declined to disclose the cause of death.

Winters was hospitalized in October after suffering a heart attack.

A blond bombshell who was tough, street-wise and outspoken, the Brooklyn, New York-raised Winters specialized in unsympathetic, abrasive mother roles that won her two Academy Awards for best supporting actress.

In 1959, she won an Oscar for her portrayal of the slobbish Mrs. Van Daan hiding with others from the Nazis in "The Diary of Anne Frank." After a variety of other movies, she won again, playing the violent mother of a blind girl in "A Patch of Blue" (1965).

She was also nominated for Oscars for "A Place in the Sun" (1951) and "The Poseidon Adventure" (1972), in which she played a heroine and insisted on doing her own stunt work.

Born Shirley Shrift on Aug. 18, 1920, in East St. Louis, Illinois, Winters moved as a child with her family to Brooklyn, where her father worked as a tailor's helper. Money was so scarce she was out on the street selling magazines at age 9.

She later worked as a Manhattan garment district model and salesgirl before first fulfilling her acting dream in an amateur revue.

Small professional parts on Broadway followed. Spotted by Columbia Pictures mogul Harry Cohn, she spent five years playing small, sexy roles in such films as "What a Woman!" (1943) and "Tonight and Every Night" (1945).

She insistently lobbied director George Cukor for the role of Ronald Colman's mistress in the hit "A Double Life" (1948), which made Hollywood take note of her considerable talent.

Acclaimed roles in "The Great Gatsby" (1949) and "Frenchie" (1951) were followed by the part in "A Place in the Sun" that quashed her sexy image—she played the dowdy, frumpy factory worker made pregnant by Montgomery Clift, who drops her for a radiant Elizabeth Taylor. The role firmly established her reputation as an actress. *Reuters*

Eminem, ex-wife tie knot once more

ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN—SUPERSTAR RAPPER Eminem remarried his ex-wife Saturday, a month after he announced they were getting back together, his publicist said.

"Marshall and Kim Mathers were married tonight in a small private ceremony at Meadow Brook Hall in Rochester, Michigan," said Dennis Dennehy, a spokesperson for Eminem's label, Interscope Records.

News helicopters hovered overhead and paparazzi congregated outside as the Grammy-winning rapper born Marshall Bruce Mathers III and his high school sweetheart arrived by limousine and were whisked inside the 110-room mansion built for auto baron John Dodge's widow 80 years ago. *AP*

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Half of planet to gather at bird flu meet

BEIJING—OFFICIALS FROM HALF THE NATIONS on the planet will meet in Beijing on Tuesday and Wednesday to raise the $1.5 billion needed to tackle the potential global catastrophe of a bird flu pandemic.

"A global threat needs a global response. That is why it is important to mobilize international cooperation," European Union external affairs commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said Friday.

"It is better to spend now on controlling avian influenza at the source and helping to prevent a new human influenza pandemic than to have to spend much more in a catastrophic event of a human pandemic."

Such calls for international collaboration in the face of the bird flu threat have multiplied in the run-up to this week's donors' conference, a joint initiative by China, the World Bank and the EU.

The deaths of three children in Turkey this month—the first victims outside Southeast Asia and China—and several outbreaks in farms in the east of the country have stoked fears the virus is spreading.

Scientists fear the more the virus spreads, the greater the chance H5N1 will mutate into a form that is easily transmissible between humans and spark a global pandemic that could claim millions of lives.

"There is a real possibility that further mutation of the virus strain might result in sustained human-to-human transmission and a human influenza pandemic" which could kill "millions of people," says a draft declaration to be submitted to the 90 countries and 25 organizations represented in Beijing.

The World Bank has estimated that the potential economic and financial cost of a pandemic could reach $800 billion and that two percentage points would be knocked off world economic growth.

First appearing in Southeast Asia in 2003, the H5N1 strain of bird flu—carried by migratory birds—spread to the Middle East and then to Europe.

Experts do not rule out the possibility that it has also reached Latin America and Africa, giving it a foothold on every continent. *AFP*

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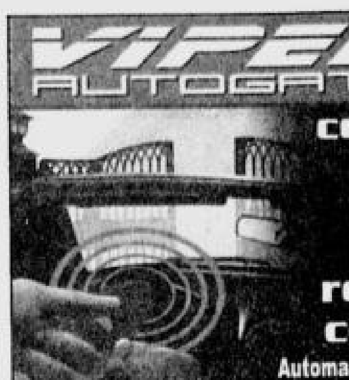

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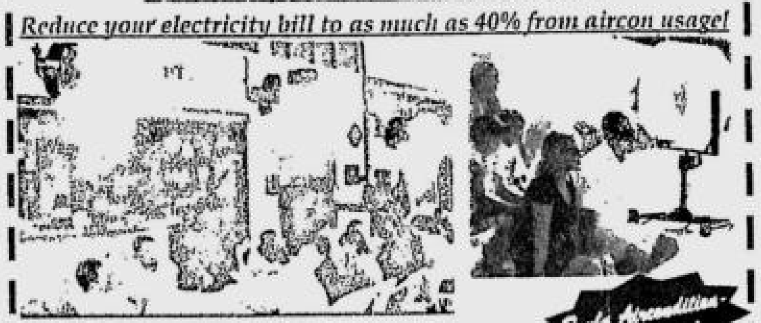

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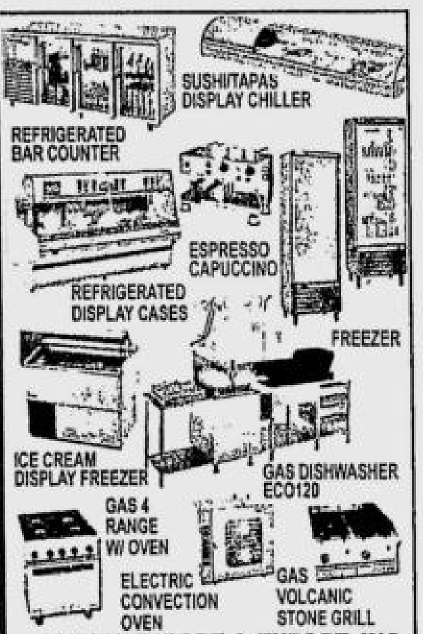

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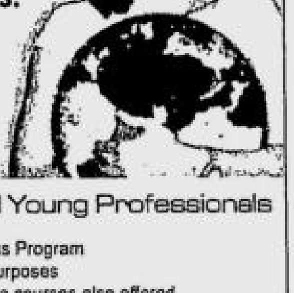

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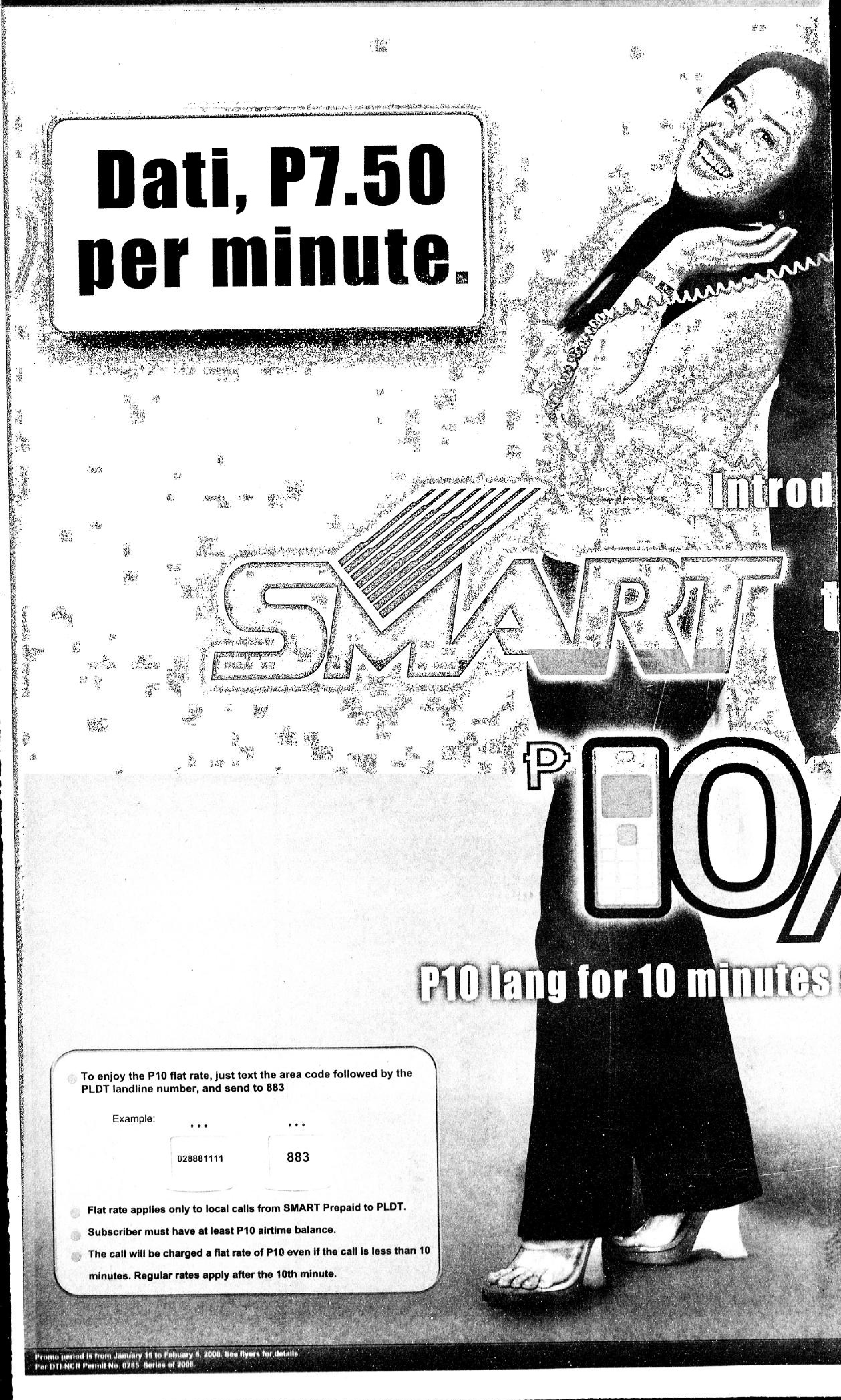

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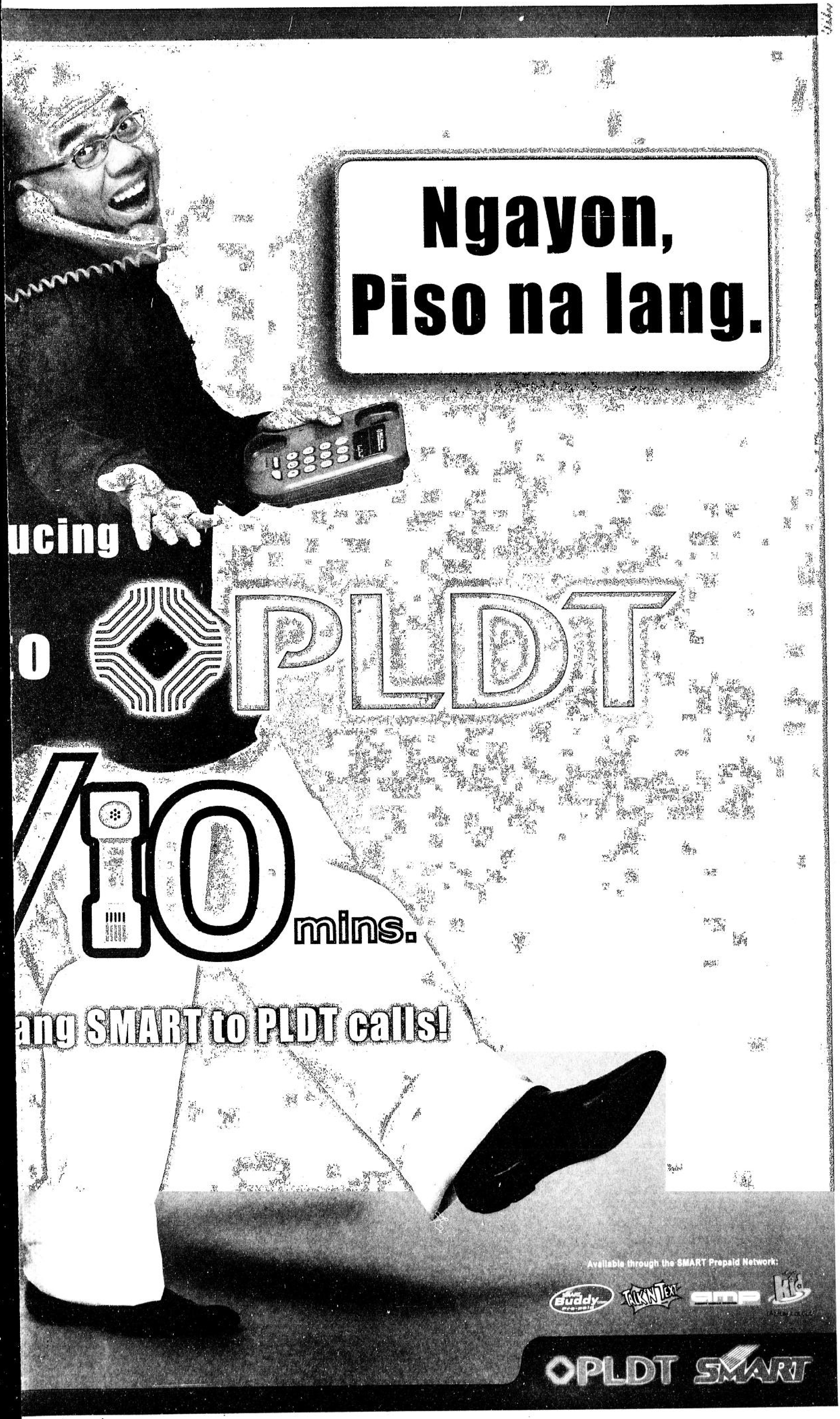
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Awful taste

EDITORIAL

SUDDENLY, WITHOUT WARNING, THE COUNTRY had its first taste of a parliamentary system last week, when political news revolved around the doings, the positioning for leadership and the struggle over strategy, in one political party. Lakas served a heaping spoonful, its different leaders and spokespersons providing various opportunities for access journalism. But the aftertaste has been all too sour.

Lakas, the ruling party, blithely assumed that its decisions would become political reality. In part, this was simply the confidence of assured politicians talking. (Politics remains the art of the possible, and some Lakas party officials are past masters at selling images and illusions.) But in part, it was also the single-mindedness of a vulnerable party. (Lakas officials know that every skirmish in the so-called great debate on Charter change is one less encounter in the President's crisis of legitimacy.)

On the most basic level, the one that ran through the headline stories of the last several days, this much is clear: Ex-President Fidel Ramos lost the contest of wills with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The President has come to the conclusion that she no longer needs the "graceful exit" Ramos described last July, when he literally showed up at a Palace under siege and helped rally the troops. This means she has found, or thinks she has found, political equilibrium—that is to say, exactly what she needs to perfect her political balancing act. She did not use such a delicate metaphor, of course; her choice of images, in her battle cry before the party's top leaders, was decidedly violent. "Steeled by bruising battles, we don't need additional training to win over our political foes in every round," she said in one instance. "With our heavy armory of democracy and legitimacy, we shall fight the squads of destabilizers and spoilers in the opposition," she said in another.

All this means is that: one, she has regained the upper hand in her leadership contest with Ramos, the party's founder, and Speaker Jose de Venecia, the party president; and two, she believes she is in a position to keep her main allies satisfied and the opposition outmaneuvered till 2010.

To be sure, the outcome was foreordained, from the moment the venue was chosen: The caucus was held, not in a neutral function room in a hotel, but right in the heart of Malacañang. The Saturday caucus, in other words, was a coronation, not a convention.

Ramos' high-profile, high-stakes pressuring of Ms Arroyo must have also helped seal the outcome. If there is anything political players have learned about the President in the last several months, it is that she is truly her mother's daughter. She does not take criticism lightly; she may not seek confrontation, but when pressed she is ready to do battle. The resignation of the Hyatt 10 from her Cabinet may have hurt her; their demand that she, too, resign could only have steeled her resolve. Ditto with Ramos' insistence that she cut her term short.

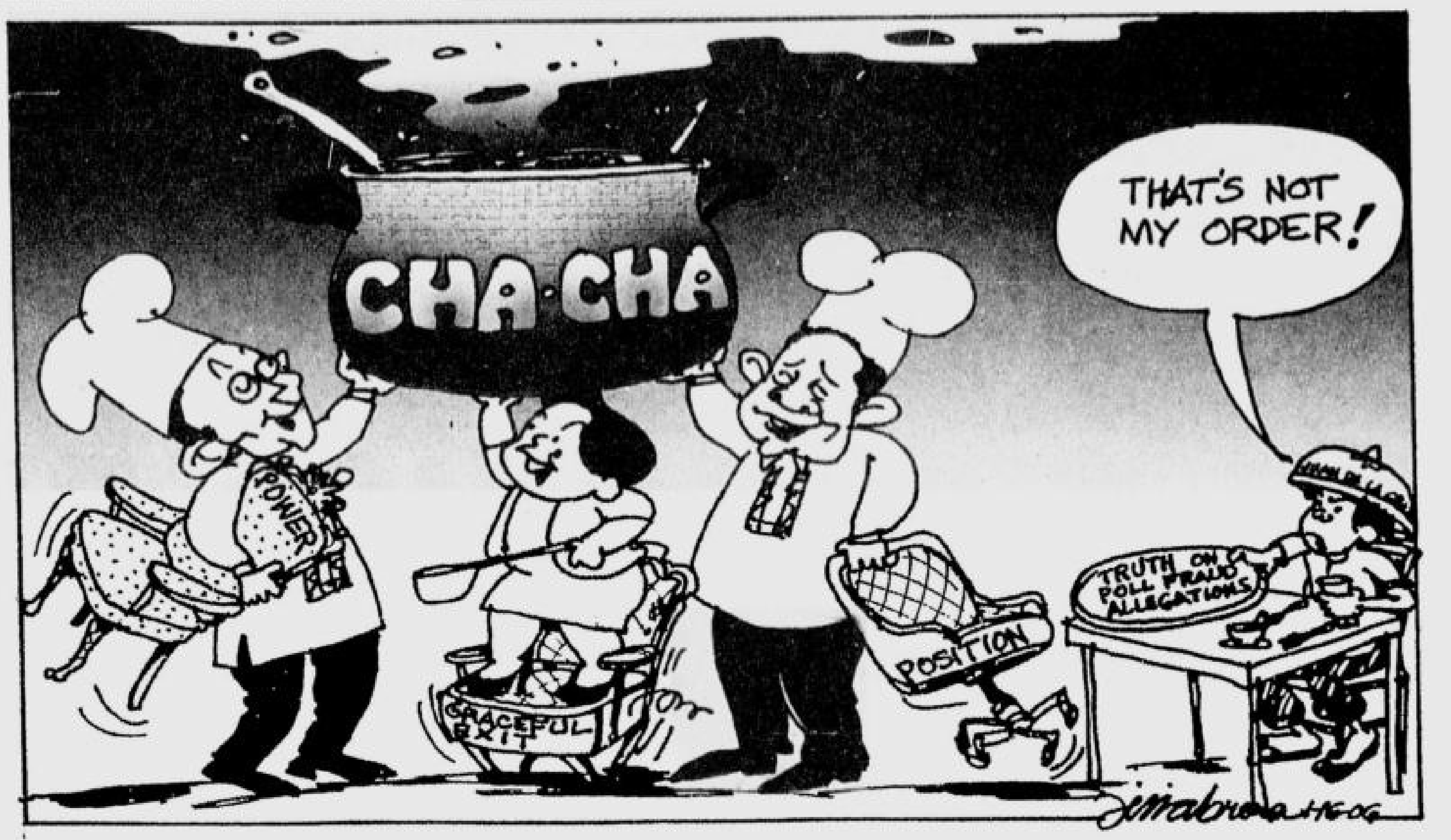
The internal politics of the Lakas party aside, however, the road to Charter change is not as smooth as the President and her allies describe it. As we pointed out yesterday, this road map wrongly assumes either a complacent Senate or a compliant Supreme Court.

But this won't stop the Lakas party from riding the Charter change express. That's a given. What the party needs to consider is Ramos' next move, and that of its allies in the administration coalition.

Lakas, after all, came into being after Ramos, then the defense secretary and Corazon Aquino's preferred successor, lost the presidential nomination of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino to Ramon Mitra. Today, his political prime is behind him, but does he feel strongly enough about the issues to repeat history?

Also, Lakas is the central party in the administration coalition, but by no means is it the only one. In the House of Representatives, especially, the dynamics of relationship with the LDP, the Liberal Party and the Nationalist Peoples Coalition is key to the coalition's political dominance. Will the other parties accept Lakas' "tight but doable" timetable and also hop on the train?

In last week's taste test, we could have sworn some of the Lakas party's partners looked like they were gagging too.



Who is mastermind of 'No-El' provision?

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE INQUIRER REPORTED LAST SATURDAY that fellow congressmen have pointed to Speaker Jose de Venecia as the mastermind of the hated "no-election" provision of the draft Constitution prepared by the Arroyo-created Consultative Commission (ConCom). Records of the ConCom show that it was former Rep. Gerry Espina (Biliran) who authored the "No-El" provision. Whether or not it was JDV who prodded Espina to make the proposal, only the two of them know.

Bribing incumbent elective officials with a three-year extension of their terms of office, without having to run and spend for re-election, does seem to have the characteristic trademark of JDV. But that is not an original trick. President Marcos did it before. When he had a new Constitution written by a Constitutional Convention, a provision was inserted, automatically making ConCom members who voted in favor of the draft Charter members of Parliament (the Batasan). The Arroyo-appointed ConCom members copied the spirit of that provision, which is actually a blatant form of bribery.

Aside from the three-year bonus for incumbent officials, the ConCom members gave President Macapagal-Arroyo the power to appoint 30 unelected persons to the Parliament. Among the 30 are members of the present ConCom who wrote the draft Charter.

It is a traditional practice of legislative bodies to ban their members from enjoying benefits that they themselves write into a Constitution or a law (an increase in salary, for example). Such benefits can only apply to the new set of officials who will replace them. This is to prevent legislators from using their powers for their own benefit.

But the members of the present ConCom have done exactly that. They abused their powers by passing a provision that would benefit themselves. They could have banned themselves from being appointed to the Parliament, as is customary, but they shamelessly did not do that. It is clear they, too, want a free ride to Parliament. *Kapalmuks talaga!*

Anyway, Espina's motion was defeated in the voting. Only 16 members voted for "No-El" while 18 voted against it.

The next day, however, Floor Leader Sergio Apostol (also a former congressman), who had voted against the Espina proposal, moved for a reconsideration of the decision. In this second voting, "No-El" won 22-19. How did this happen?

In the second balloting, some members who originally voted against the No-El voted in favor of that provision (like Apostol and Sr. Luz Soriano); two others abstained (Rep. Victor Ortega and newsman Gil Abarico); and one happened or chose to be absent (Rep. Gualberto Duavit).

Curiously, Espina, the author of the "No-El" provision, voted against the approval of the Charter, although his proposal was included in the draft Constitution.

The interesting questions are: Why did some members change their votes? Why did Apostol move for a reconsideration of the decision he himself helped bring about? Who talked to them to make them change their minds? Was it JDV? What did he dangle before them to convince them to somersault?

If JDV was indeed behind these ConCom members' change of mind, it would show you his dexterity in seducing colleagues into agreeing to his way of thinking. (If he were to use this seductive talent on women, he could be another Don Juan.) That is why he was able to seduce congressmen into electing him to be their Speaker for several terms already. (He formed the Rainbow Coalition from members of different political parties.) That is why he is sure that once we have a parliamentary government, he would be the new prime minister. And that is why he is confident that he can do the same thing in the new Parliament. For the members of the incoming Parliament will mostly be the same greedy, grasping and opportunist congressmen we have now. And JDV has proven to them, time and time again, that the story about finding a pot of gold at the foot of the "Rainbow" is true.

One official who sticks out as a probable victim of JDV's seduction is Gov. Ben Evardone of Eastern Samar, who is ironically a former journalist and, therefore, should know better. Evardone is the front man of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (ULAP), the association of local government officials behind the move to gather signatures for a "people's initiative" in case the Constituent Assembly ploy is blocked by the Senate. He seems to be enamored of a parliamentary/federal system of government. He should realize that in case that happens, his province would be among the worst hit.

Eastern Samar is among the poorest provinces in the country. In a federal system, the provinces will have to fend for themselves. They won't get any funding from the national government as much as they do now. They will have to pay their own police forces, health personnel, teachers, legislatures, etc. The departments of the national government will have to be replicated in the provincial level. The rich provinces and cities in Luzon, in the Visayas (Cebu and Bacolod) and in Mindanao (Davao and, perhaps, Cagayan de Oro) will be able to support themselves. But what about the poor provinces? How will they support themselves?

They will be forced to tax their constituents more. But as they say, you can't squeeze blood out of a turnip. How can you squeeze more taxes out of the poor people of Eastern Samar and similar provinces? Most of the people in these areas are farmers and fishermen who can't afford to pay more taxes.

Local government officials are seduced by the idea of more autonomy for themselves. But think what could happen when the funding from the national government would be shut off. Their constituents might chase them out of their provinces.

Mob rule

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Conrado de Quiros

FIRST, FIDEL RAMOS WANTED GLORIA Macapagal-Arroyo to resign by 2006, demanding that she do so to pave the way for a change in government. Then he gave her an extension up to 2007, provided she did not follow the recommendation of her Consultative Commission on Charter change to scrap the 2007 elections. Ramos asked that GMA resign by 2007 to resolve the problem of her legitimacy in the wake of the "Hello Garci" tapes, and run for parliament instead.

Then following the meeting of Lakas, Ramos was reported to have agreed that GMA might serve out her term until 2010 provided that the 2007 elections were held and that GMA's powers were clipped. GMA in turn was reported to have said she would accede to this if Congress approved it. Over the weekend, Ramos denied this, saying it was still his position that GMA resign next year.

What's wrong with the picture?

It is not that Ramos can't seem to make up his mind on when GMA should resign. That is the least of our worries. What's wrong with the picture is that, quite simply, who the hell is Ramos to be telling anyone what to do? Who the hell is Ramos to be deciding what kind of government we should have and who should head it? Who the hell is Ramos to be decreeing the future of this country?

Last I looked he was an ordinary citizen, just like you and me, who happens to be richer—indeed infinitely so—from being president at one point and profiting from various transactions. Indeed, last I looked he was the fellow who, along with Jose de Venecia, propped up GMA after she admitted obliquely to talking with Garci in her apology to the nation, thereby blocking a true closure to the problem of an illegitimate President there and then.

I do not recall voting for Ramos in 2004. I do not recall him running for office in 2004. Why on earth should he have the right to do things in my name? Why on earth should he have the right to do things in anybody's name?

If GMA did not cheat during the last elections, why should anyone have the right to demand that she resign or be ousted from power? That was my complaint last July with the position taken by Corazon Aquino and the members of the "Hyatt 10," and that has been my complaint with the position they have maintained afterward, after they metamorphosed into various organizations with various names. Never once, in the statements they issued calling for GMA to resign, did they mention that she cheated in the elections. The "Hyatt 10" expressly said they were not judging GMA on accusations she did so, they were resigning because there were "pressing concerns confronting the nation at the core of which lay issues of leadership and credibility." Cory expressly said as well she wasn't judging GMA either on her apology, she was asking her to resign because "the country cannot continue in its present tumultuous state."

Why should problems of leadership and credibility and a tumultuous state of affairs be sufficient reason for asking a legitimate head of state to resign or be overthrown? If so, then all the presidents of this country should have been asked to resign or be overthrown. In Erap's case at least we had an impeachment trial to suggest—even if, as his camp points out, it was never proven—he betrayed the public trust. If GMA did not cheat in the elections, if she is the duly constituted President of this country, who is Cory to demand she resign? Who are the Hyatt 10 to demand she resign? Who is Ramos to demand she resign?

But, of course, they are loath to mention that GMA cheated in the last elections. Because then we have to ask them as well why they stood by and said nothing while she did so. Because then we have to ask them why they continued to stand by and said nothing after she was proclaimed President while the nation slept.

But if GMA cheated in the elections—and that is pretty much the only certainty we have in this country—then why should she be given all sorts of options to choose why and when she should resign? At the very least, what is Ramos telling this country, that every time a candidate for the highest position of the land cheats in elections, we will change the government to give him or her a graceful exit? That is idiotic. Which is what Charter change is as a solution to an illegitimate presidency. Which is what Charter change is to putting a closure to the problem of someone perverting the most basic institution of democracy.

First remove an illegitimate President from office, then talk Charter change till you're blue in the face. The problem is a moral one, the solution is a moral one. The problem is that GMA cheated in the elections, the solution is for her to resign forthwith or to be ousted. It is not for Ramos to decide the form and schedule of her resignation, it is for the people to do so. That form is unconditional, and that schedule is immediate. The farce has gone on long enough.

Ironically, all that Ramos' antics show are the infinite dangers of a parliamentary system, which he has been earnestly pushing as the solution to this country's problems. They show that if you have a political system where politicians leave and join parties faster than they wear clothes, where the party in power—in this case Lakas—can dominate national life, you are not going to have less personality-based politics, you are going to have more of it. What you are going to have are people like Ramos and De Venecia and Prospero Pichay and their ilk decreeing who resigns and who does not, who is wrong and who is not, who keeps power and who does not. For no other reason than that, it is the way they want it. That is not a politics of principle or ideology.

That is mob rule.

The future of Charter change

Sounding Board

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

TO HEAR SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA SPEAK OF Charter change, one would think that it's all over but the cheering. The President's recent incantation that there should be Charter change by the middle of the year should assure De Venecia even more in his belief. The reality, however, is not that way at all. The Senate has so far stood firm against the blandishments from the House of Representatives. And in the end, the Charter change issue will have to go to the Supreme Court for resolution.

Resolutions coming from the Court are rarely instant. For instance, we are still waiting for the resolution of the challenge to Executive Order 464.

At the moment, the biggest obstacle to Charter change is the Senate. Charter change can be initiated only by Congress. If the Senate refuses to participate, Charter change cannot be initiated. Congress has two houses and the act of only one house is not an act of Congress. If, under the Constitution neither house may adjourn for more than three days without the consent of the other, with greater reason such an important move as initiating Charter change may not be done by one house without the consent of the other.

Indeed, the Senate might decide to participate in a Constituent Assembly. Such fact alone, however, does not mean that the Senate has consented to Charter change. To consent means to approve a proposed change. And the Constitution says that this can be achieved by a vote of three-fourths of all its members.

The computation of the required three-fourths vote has now become a subject of intense debate. The final resolution of this debate, contrary to the desire of the President, cannot possibly be achieved before the middle of the year. Until the controversy becomes actual, that is, until either the House or Senate acts, the Court will not step in.

From my listening post, I have heard three modes of vote computation. The most liberal of these is the one in the mind of De Venecia, which I consider is a cry of desperation. Reportedly, for the Speaker, even if only one senator attends a session of a Constituent Assembly, there can be a valid proposal of amendment, provided that the number of votes approving the proposal reaches three-fourths of all the members of the House and of the Senate added together. How the act of one senator can be the act of the whole Senate is beyond me.

Another mode of computation, which I understand might be considered by some well-placed members of the judiciary, is that a majority vote of the members of the Senate will suffice to make the proposal a proposal of the whole Congress. So far, however, I have not heard anyone openly espousing such a mode.

A third mode of computation is the strict mode. This is what I personally hold; specifically, that the vote required is three-fourths of all the members of the Senate and three-fourths of all the members of the House, taken separately. In support of this position is the fact that Congress is bicameral and a bicameral body votes separately. When the Constitution wants the two houses to vote jointly, it says so. This it does when Congress is authorized to override a declaration of martial law. And when Congress can act only in joint session—as in the case when it is called to declare the existence of a state of war—the Constitution specifically commands that they vote separately. Similarly, under the 1935 Constitution, when Congress could propose amendments only if assembled in joint session, the Constitution commanded that that they vote separately. The reason is simple: voting jointly, unless authorized as an exception by the Constitution, destroys the bicameral character of Congress. Thus, the apparent vagueness of the constitutional text on Charter change must be interpreted in the light of the bicameral structure of Congress. Structural interpretation is one of the legitimate modes of constitutional construction.

As I said at the start, all of this will ultimately have to be decided by the Supreme Court. At the moment, we can only try to guess what winds are blowing in the Supreme Court.

Another issue which the Supreme Court may have to face is the matter of initiative and referendum. This is what is behind the signature drive launched by local government officials. Can this be used to hasten the realization of the President's dream of Charter change by June this year? I am afraid not—because of two major obstacles. First, the Constitution says that "Congress shall provide for the implementation of the exercise of this right." Congress did pass an initiative and referendum law; but in 1997 the Supreme Court ruled that the law as crafted was not good enough for Charter change. True, the Supreme Court then said that the system "should no longer be kept in the cold . . . Congress should not tarry any longer in complying with the constitutional mandate . . ." However, to date, Congress has not complied.

It might encourage those relying on initiative and referendum—to achieve Charter change soonest—to know that the decision which ruled against the sufficiency of the existing law was by a vote of 8 to 5, with both Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban and Justice Reynato Puno dissenting. Unfortunately, however, (or fortunately), even if the 1997 decision is reversed tomorrow, it would not help the cause of De Venecia and the President. Initiative and referendum can achieve "emendments," that is, minor changes in the Constitution; but it cannot achieve "revision," or a major overhaul of the Constitution, such as a shift from a presidential to a parliamentary system, or from a bicameral to a unicameral system, or from a unitary to a federal system.

Would we have Charter change by June? I would not bet on it.

From the islands to the highlands

Kris-Crossing Mindanao

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

DAVAO CITY, HOST TO THE 25th ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF), and its environs have been in a festive atmosphere since Friday. The regional forum, which kicked off last Friday with a meeting of tourism ministers at the world-renowned Pearl Farm Beach Resort in nearby Island Garden City of Samal, is expected to gather until Jan. 21 more than 2,000 foreign and local participants, not only from the 10-country Asean bloc but also from Japan, China, the United States and Europe.

While the main objective of the nine-day trade and travel event is to promote Asean as one of the world's major tourism destinations, local organizers touted the hosting of ATF as a "coming-out party" for Mindanao; but especially for Davao City, which in 2003 fell into a "state of lawless violence" after the city's main airport and seaport were bombed. Hosting an international event like the ATF, organizers say, gives Davao a fitting but rare opportunity to once again assert its eminent position not only as the political center of the South but also as Mindanao's economic and tourism hub.

To "wow" the ATF participants, Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's administration, in tandem with the private sector, poured millions of pesos to make Davao "a city in bloom." Probably the city's most visible makeover is the 600 decorative street lampposts that feature the purple-colored rare orchid *waling-waling*, giving the city's nocturnal landscape a welcoming glow. Thousands of newly acquired trash bins have also been installed all around the city, with Duterte warning to run after garbage violators and throw them at the city's dump. An extensive beautification drive has led many downtown barangays and private establishments to refurbish and tidy up their premises, even ridding government lots of illegal structures erected by informal settlers.

To connect the participants to Davao's past, there is the renovated Davao Museum of History and Ethnography, which was opened last Saturday. In addition, there are the Mindanao Trade Expo (showcasing the island's artworks, crafts and products) and the Travel Exchange Exhibit (held in different venues), which also feature other areas of Mindanao.

Tomorrow, a mini-festival show, complete with the street-dancing and pomp that attend the annual Kadayawan Festival, will be opened at the Central Bank.

But, probably, the most elaborate preparation made by the city was in the area of security. Hundreds of regular and auxiliary police and military personnel have been deployed throughout the city to the look out for potential saboteurs. Even the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has offered to help prevent possible terrorist attacks. The tough-talking Duterte has also ordered a "preemptive strike" on suspected terrorists, saying a "terror threat" has become "very imminent," that is why "we have increased [the number] of security forces and we are trying our best to control the situation. With or without the threat, the ATF will go on," Duterte said.

Aside from the expected immediate economic bonanza—organizers expect the local autonomy to generate P85 million from the forum—local tourism stakeholders also want to woo potential foreign investors to cash-in on the region's largely untapped eco-tourism potential. "We will highlight the diversity of Davao through our island-to-highland campaign," said Art Boncato, vice chair of the ATF local host committee and chair of the Davao Tourism Association (Data). Included in the "highlights" are Igacos, whose beaches rival those of Boracay's; the highland resorts of Davao City, like the Eden Garden Resort; the Mt. Apo National Park; and the Philippine Eagle Reservation in Malagos.

On the side, it is hoped that, through the ATF, foreign investors will be lured to revive the mothballed $300-million Samal Casino Hotel, one of the flagship projects of former President Fidel Ramos, and previously operated by Ekrand Berhad Holdings, a Malaysian conglomerate. Its grand and lavish opening several years ago notwithstanding, the 300-room casino hotel has been losing millions of pesos since—leaving in limbo the fate of hundreds of agrarian reform beneficiaries who were persuaded to lease their CARP-awarded lands for the promise of big income that never materialized.

From all indications, the holding of the ATF in Davao definitely has given the tourism industry (particularly in Davao and Mindanao) a big boost and, for that matter, might even help ease the country's economy. But it could also turn out to be just a panacea.

As the latest SWS survey showed, Mindanao remains one area of the country where the incidence of poverty is among the highest.

"We have to be cautious in looking at tourism as the be-all and end-all of our economic problems," commented lawyer Angela Librado-Trinidad, chair of the Davao City Council's Committee on Women and Children.

For one, she said, a tourism-induced economic development, in most cases, also gives rise to social problems, like the proliferation of sex-trade. On the other hand, since the tourism industry is largely cornered by big business, like the airline and hotel owners, its economic benefits hardly benefit the many poor Filipinos, added Trinidad. "At most it can provide temporary economic relief for the people but not in the long run. What we need are industries that provide permanent, not temporary jobs, and adequate compensation for the people."

Indeed, our people "from the islands to the highlands" need more than just momentary pomp.

* * *

Comments at kar_laws@yahoo.com or karlos_z23@hotmail.com

Behind our Constitutions, past and present

The Long View

Manuel L. Quezon III

A DECADE OR SO AGO, A MOVEMENT CALLED Demokrasya: Ipagtanggol ang Konstitusyon (Democracy: Defend the Constitution) was launched with this ringing statement: "Some people would amend the Constitution to do away with 'waste'; to make the government 'more responsive'; to eliminate 'gridlock'—as if these weren't government fault." The movement was headed by the late Justice Cecilia Muñoz-Palma. Also in it were former UP president Jose Abueva, Solita Monsod and the late Sen. Ambrosio Padilla.

That they got nowhere is demonstrated by the fact that Abueva wanted parliamentary government and federalism so badly that he would settle for them in name, if not in fact, merely to achieve some sort of victory in the twilight of his life. The decades-long dedication of people like Abueva has been seized upon by people who have no affection for democracy. People who would much rather conduct deals among themselves without having to bother with things like public opinion, a national electorate, or the principle of checks and balances.

These people would amend the Constitution to do away with "waste"; to make the government "more responsive"; to eliminate "gridlock"—as if all these ills weren't the indications of a system frantically trying to prevent the complete collapse of a republican government. In other words, these people are against balances but are all for checks—so long as they aren't postdated, or bounced.

As it is, our present Constitution—which will be 19 years old on Feb. 2—may not survive long enough to reach its 20th year. It is useful at this point, to begin by revisiting the decision to replace the 1935 Constitution and the drafting of the present Constitution.

When it was still in force, the 1935 Constitution was held to contain two major flaws. The first was the broad definition of the conditions that justified the imposition of martial law, which did not specify any limitations as to its duration or extent. Vicente Albano Pacis, bellowed to his dying day that the provision on martial law was copied word for word from the Jones Law (which served as a "colonial basic law" before the establishment of the Commonwealth), but minus the Jones Law proviso requiring the governor general to submit, for approval or disapproval, his action to the president of the United States. According to Pacis, this was done deliberately, precisely to offer presidents a means to establish absolute power.

Claro M. Recto did make a speech in the 1950s, cautioning the public on how susceptible to abuse the provision on martial law was; that no one bothered to amend the provision, despite Recto's warning, revealed how it never occurred to the people that such an abuse was likely to happen. No sense worrying about incipient dictators when no incumbent president (except Ferdinand Marcos) was ever able to enjoy legitimate second terms in the first place (though had Manuel Roxas Sr. and Ramon Magsaysay Sr. lived, they almost surely would have been re-elected)!

The second flaw of the 1935 Charter was seen to lie in its being a "colonial document." Its colonial nature was the rationale for the Constitutional Convention in 1971. And yet, after the adoption of the 1973 Constitution, affection for the junked basic law continued. This affection persisted because of what could only be described as the highly irregular circumstances under which the 1973 Constitution was "approved." From the very start, observers and critics (imprisoned or not) of Marcos pointed out that a new Charter, in order to be ratified legally, had to be accepted in a national referendum. Marcos' shooing everybody into village assemblies (the ancestor of the proposed local government people's initiative), where they were asked to raise their hands to signify their acceptance of the railroaded new Charter, hardly constituted a referendum in the accepted manner.

The new Charter's validity was questioned before the Supreme Court (Javellana v. the Executive Secretary) in 1973. A messy decision—in which five points were raised—resulted when six justices chose to uphold the validity of the new Constitution, with four independent justices dissenting: this did nothing to settle the issue in people's minds, and served only to tarnish the Supreme Court's image.

In 1981, former President Diosdado Macapagal, who had at first feared for his life and safety under the Bagong Lipunan (New Society), took the bold (and symbolic) step of reconvening the ConCon, "securing" (in the words of Alice Colet Villadolid in an INQUIRER commentary published about a decade ago) the attendance of "130 brave delegates of the total number of 311. They issued a proclamation that the Charter had not been validly ratified and that all actions based on it were null and void. Macapagal told the foreign press that without the barangay-ratified Charter, President Marcos must abide by the Constitution of 1935, which prohibited further extension of his term." Marcos, of course, just snickered at them.

Two years later, Ninoy Aquino came home and was murdered. The dictatorship's implosion became irreversible. In his arrival statement, which was widely publicized in the days that followed his murder (it was printed in full in Mr. & Ms), Ninoy called for the restoration of all "rights and freedoms" in the 1935 Constitution—but not a return to the Charter itself. It would have been impolite for Ninoy, who was hoping to talk Marcos into being reasonable, to call for the junking of the Marcos 1973 Constitution. Getting Marcos to step down was a tall enough order. Even Ninoy had to concede that Marcos (as Francisco Nemenzo wrote, after Edsa) "had irretrievably consigned the 1935 Constitution to the dustbin of history."

(To be continued)

It's the curriculum

Commentary

Eugenia Duran Apostol

"IT'S THE CURRICULUM, STUPID!" THE AMERICANS EXclaimed when they were told that their education system was not effective.

So did the Filipinos, when they were told the same thing.

That's what Dr. Isagani Cruz is saying in his book, "The Basic Education Curriculum in 17 Easy Lessons."

At a recent dinner celebrating the golden wedding anniversary of Rody and Mayette Lichauco, I happened to be seated beside Rody's brother Ding. In times like this, I never miss a chance to talk about the Education Revolution.

My egghead dinner companion's gut reaction to our advocacy was crisp, concise and not unexpected. "It's the curriculum. That's what we should look into," Ding said as he contemplated the hors d'oeuvres.

Afterwards, I did a bit of research and I found out that the Department of Education's textbook definition of curriculum is that "it is a systematic group of experiences or sequences of courses or subjects required for graduation or certification in the elementary and secondary levels of education."

Hmmm...

There's more to it than this, of course. Any educator will tell you that a curriculum is designed to meet certain pre-determined objectives. For instance, there's a set of simple exercises for color and shape recognition in the curriculum for pre-schoolers.

On the other hand, the various curricula being implemented under our educational system are mandated by law to give "maximum contribution toward the attainment of national development goals." One of these goals is "to achieve and strengthen national unity and consciousness, and preserve, develop and promote desirable cultural, moral and spiritual values in a changing world." Ostensibly, through a meticulously crafted curriculum, our educational institutions should be able to "inculcate love of country, teach the duties of citizenship, and develop moral character, personal discipline, and scientific, technological and vocational efficiency."

(In case you're wondering, the above quotes come from Batas Pambansa Blg. 232, also called the Education Act of 1982. As far as I can tell, this is the prevailing legislation that provides for the establishment and maintenance of the Philippine education system. The newer RA 9155 [the Governance of Basic Education Act] passed in 2001 focuses on establishing a governance framework and defines levels of authority and accountability in the DepEd. Plainly put, it was already very clear to us in 1982 that the education system is a key factor in our growth as a nation.)

How near are we to the attainment of these lofty goals?

Let's do a "Chapter Search" to January 2005. (Notice that I did not say "Rewind." We're in a digital world after all.) In his keynote address at the Unesco National Conference, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo quoted the United Nations resolution declaring 2005-2015 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development where "the vision of education for social development is a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from quality education and learn the values, behavior and lifestyle required for a sustainable future and for positive social transformation."

To attain this vision, we have to have a truly responsive curriculum in place.

Secretary Romulo also pointed out that one of the policy recommendations on education—formulated at the July 2003 Conference on Globalization with a Human Face held in Japan—was that "curriculum development must be the product of a consultative process that involves all stakeholders including civil society, local communities, parents and students."

Ding Lichauco's heart was in the right place when he said that we really should look into the curriculum if we want our education system to be world-class. The good news is that in 2002, the DepEd not only looked but actually made major revisions to the existing curriculum for elementary and high school. The output of this undertaking was the controversial Revised Basic Education Curriculum (RBEC), more popularly known as the Makabayan Curriculum. The merits—as well as the downside—of the RBEC are until now the subject of furious debate—which is probably why its full and widespread implementation is yet to be.

When he was still education undersecretary, Dr. Cruz maintained the view that the responsibility for forming a new curriculum should be removed from the DepEd. "Sincere though most of them are, the DepEd officials have only an official view of the curriculum. As any educator knows, the official view is only one of many equally valid ways to look at the public school curriculum. Curricular change is not managed by a secretary or undersecretary, not even by an entire 480,000-strong Department of Education. It is managed and will be managed by 75 million Filipinos," said Dr. Cruz in 2001, two years before his sentiments were validated at the Japan Globalization Conference.

Dr. Cruz called this undertaking the People Power Model of Curricular Change. "A real curriculum should be a couple of volumes long, because it would contain learning competencies, lesson plans, reference materials and all the other things demanded by educational theory. The very fact that [the RBEC] is only a few pages long (should cue us that it is up to us) as parents of children in public schools, as teachers in public schools, as concerned citizens, to fill in the huge gaps in the RBEC," said Dr. Cruz.

We say this is what the Education Revolution is all about. What and how our children learn is our collective responsibility.

That they grow up to become socially responsible citizens steeped in democratic principles is our moral imperative.

They Said

Realm of the unknown

"As the presidential spokesman, I believe Press Secretary (Ignacio) Bunye, who gained notoriety for presenting two versions of the Garci tapes, should limit his press briefings to issues and concerns affecting the President and should not venture into the realm of the unknown."

—Ed Malay, former President Fidel V. Ramos' media consultant, on Bunye's claim that he has "very unflattering" details about the meeting of FVR, former Sen. Tito Sotto and Senate President Franklin Drilon

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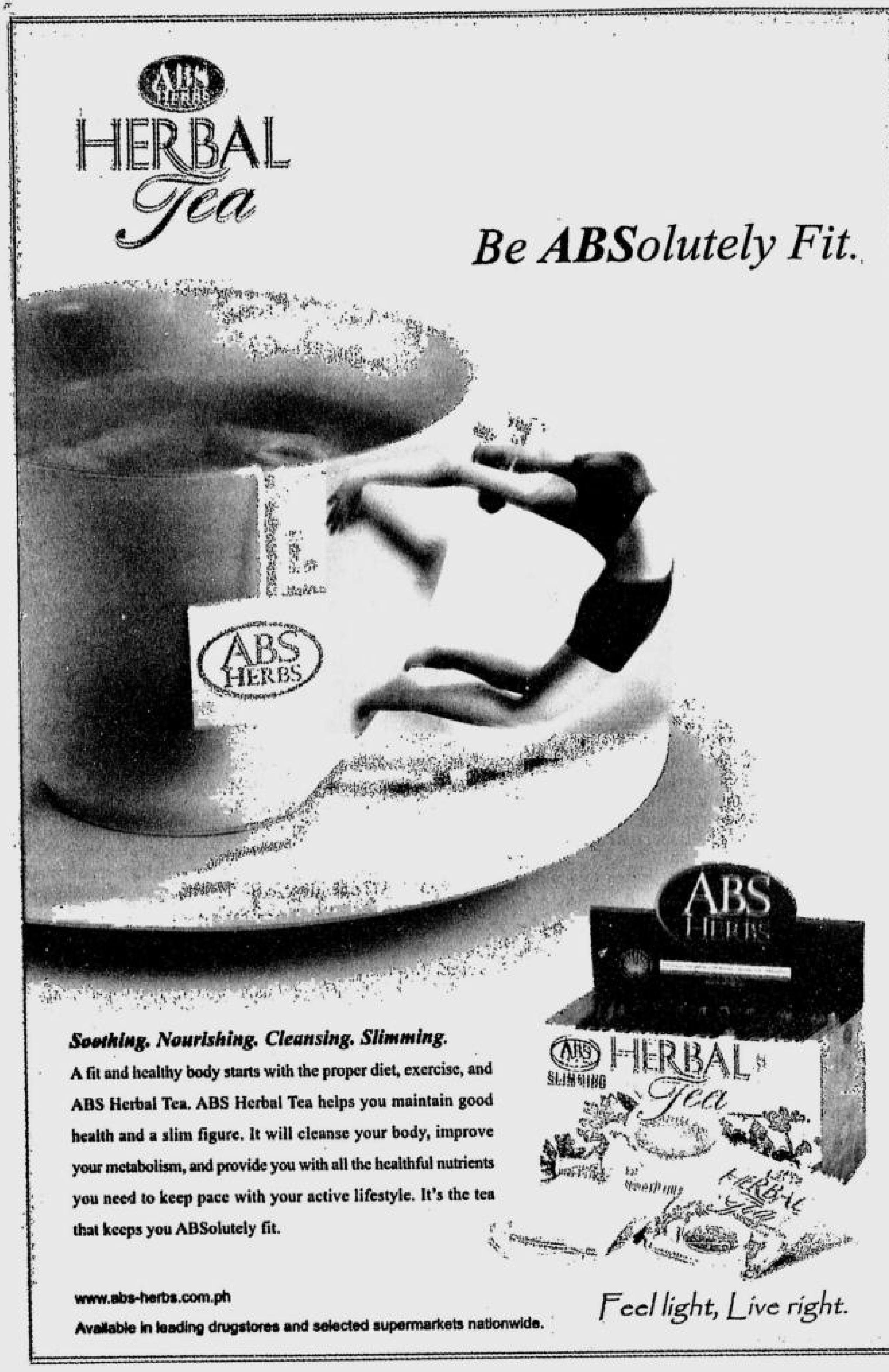

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Incorrigible US soldiers

IF THE RP-US VISITING FORCES AGREEMENT indeed provides that American soldiers accused of violating Philippine laws should remain under the custody of the US Embassy until their indictment, so be it. (PDI, 12/29/05)

What is more important is that the prosecution of the accused should take its course. Let us not waste too much time debating the already much-ballyhooed custody issue. These debates only expose newer American lapdogs on Philippine soil.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye may be right in saying that the case against the four US soldiers in the Subic rape case is an isolated one. Only for now, perhaps—or until we shall have sent these rapists behind bars.

Of course, Bunye conveniently forgot the legions of Filipino women who had been raped with impunity by American soldiers many years ago in Clark Air Base. Add to that the rape cases also committed by US servicemen who were stationed in Japan under the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement (Sofa).

What comes to public mind is this inescapable impression: Everywhere else, American soldiers are incorrigible rapists. If only for that, lawyer Katrina Legarda is right in saying that the VFA was a wrong move.

—RUDY L. CORONEL,
10 Venus St.,
Golden Country Homes,
Alangilan, Batangas City

San Beda rector's act of discretion

I DO NOT WISH TO PICK A QUARREL WITH the esteemed Justice Isagani Cruz over his Jan. 8 column. He is a jurist and a man of letters for whom I have only tremendous respect and admiration. I have had the honor of inviting him on different occasions to lecture at the Philippine Judicial Academy, and the joy of being favored with an acceptance on his part.

Fr. Anscar Chupungco, O.S.B., rector-president of San Beda College, had earlier consulted with me on the issue and had asked me to read some of the letters addressed to him on the controversy. I ventured some views, strongly suggesting something in the nature of a Joe de V "win-win" solution.

I perfectly understand the position of the faculty. Many of them are with me in the Graduate School of Law, and I know them to be persons of intellectual acumen and integrity. I also understand why Father Anscar took the position he had taken.

I submit for consideration the following propositions:

1. Father Anscar merely approved the recommendation of the dean of the College of Law. He did not by any means intend to pass the responsibility to make a decision to Dean Virgilio Jara, but it should also be clear that his action was neither whim nor fancy. Administratively, it was the more prudent course of action for the rector-president to approve the dean's recommendation because the dean is at ground-zero.

2. Father Anscar was advised that academic freedom, according to Camacho v. Coresis, G.R. 134372 (Aug. 22, 2002) was principally the freedom of the institution and then, too, the freedom of the individual professor. It was his reading of the doctrine of that case that the matter of "who may be admitted to study"—and therefore admission and retention policies—pertained to the academic freedom of the institution and, therefore, of San Beda as a corporate entity.

3. Father Anscar had difficulty with the concept of "autonomy" of the College of Law because it has always been his understanding that the College of Law is integral to the corporate institution and is, in that measure, not "autonomous."

When he was asked by the dean of the College of Law to act on the latter's recommendation, Father Anscar exercised an act of discretion, one that I believe he can properly perform under the laws governing education, as well as under the corporate and administrative guidelines of San Beda College.

I hope that these points contribute to a greater understanding of the issue, which I fervently pray will not be unduly protracted. I wish to end by noting that Prof. Carlo Cruz, though I never had the privilege of meeting him personally, will be sorely missed. Being the son of an illustrious father, he cannot be any less. I pray, however, that Our Lady of Monserrat, for whom every Bedan has a fond devotion, will gently lead his footsteps back to Mendiola.

—FR. RANHILIO CALLANGAN AQUINO,
dean, Graduate School of Law,
San Beda College, Manila

Picop, cancer cases: no causative link

THIS CONCERNS AN INQUIRER REPORT TItled "Big C haunts Bislig City folk." (PDI, 1/11/05)

The news article gives the impression that cancer cases in Bislig have reached alarming proportions due to the pulp mill operations of Picop Resources Inc. For the sake of fairness and responsible reporting, we submit this letter for publication.

Summarized below are the cancer cases, male and female, recorded in the Philippines in 2005 by the Philippine Cancer Society-Manila Cancer Registry. The numbers are crude rates per 100,000 people.

In comparison, the crude rates and cancer cases in Mangagoy and Tabon, Bislig City for the period 2000-2005 are listed:

	2005 PHILS. M/F CR	2000-05, MGY/TABON CR	CASES
Maxilliary/oral	7.3	1.8	1
Bone/leukemia	10.0	7.3	4
Brain	3.6	1.8	1
Breast/ductile	34.0	20.1	11
Cervical	17.6	3.7	2
Colonic	11.2	1.8	1
Gall bladder	3.2	1.8	1
Gastric	9.4	0	0
Laryngeal	4.1	1.8	·1
Liver	18.2	1.8	1
Lung	41.1	18.3	10
Rectal	20.5	5.5	3
Thyroid	8.5	5.5	3

Population of Mangagoy and Tabon: 54,719
CR: Crude Rate per 100,000
(Source: A. Philippine Cancer Society-Manila Cancer Registry; B. Andres Soriano Memorial Hospital Cooperative and Bislig District Hospital)

The facts are very clear. The reported cases and crude rates in Barangays Mangagoy and Tabon over a six-year period are substantially below the number of cases recorded in the entire Philippines in 2005. And to think that the two barangays are a high-density area: it has a population of 54,719, more than half of Bislig's 97,860 (NSO, 2000).

Needless to say, there is not even a need to discuss whether there is a causative link between the cancer cases and Picop's pulp mill operations. The recorded cases themselves prove this is not an issue.

—WILFREDO D. FUENTES,
vice president-resident manager,
Picop Resources Inc., Tabon,
Bislig City, Surigao del Sur

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Assistant Editor **Tony Bergonia**

16 drown, 4 missing in fluvial procession

By Jani Arnaiz, Joey Gabieta and Connie E. Fernandez,
PDI Visayas Bureau

MAASIN CITY—THE FLUVIAL parade in honor of the feast of the Holy Child Jesus yesterday took a tragic turn when 16 people, 14 of them children, drowned after their boat capsized in the waters off San Ricardo town on Panaon Island, Southern Leyte.

Residents of Barangay Inulinan cancelled all festivities to mourn the dead, especially the children aged between 2 and 16.

"It is very quiet here. Residents have cancelled their plans for the fiesta after what happened," said SPO4 Benjamin Alterado, San Ricardo police chief.

Among the scrapped events was the Sinulog competition among five groups of students at the San Ricardo National School grounds that would have followed the fluvial parade.

Alterado said the ML Jun Jay, owned by the town's Vice Mayor Fiel Culpa, was leading 15 small pumpboats in the procession. At its prow was the image of the Holy Child Jesus mounted on a Styropor material.

The boat carried 100 people, including members of the Drums and Bugle Corps of the San Ricardo Elementary School.

Alterado said the fluvial parade kicked off at about 8:30 a.m. at the wharf in Barangay Inulinan at the town proper. Most of the passengers, he added, sat on the right side to get a view of the sea.

After sailing about 200 meters from the port, the vessel made a turn on its way back, but it tilted on the side and capsized.

The other boats tried to reach the overturned motor launch and rescue the passengers.

Among those recovered was the floating image of the Sto. Niño.

Twenty-two passengers were brought to the district hospital in nearby Pintuyan town, a 15-minute boat ride from San Ricardo.

Sixteen people were declared dead on arrival at the hospital. Among them were Rachel, 3, and Isidro, 4, all surnamed Colajara; Jazzel May Bacal, 9; Carmel Collao, 4; Analyn Rodillas, 16; Raymund Angub, 14; Rosalie Olandrina, 45; John Christian Lim, 2; Ken Solihon, 7; Christian John Labra, 6; Jocel Mae Bacud, 9; Allan James Almeda, 10; and Lyn Gae Bonotan, 11.

Also killed were Evengeline Refugio, 42, and her children Justicio, 8, and Ma. Encha Christy, 2.

Alterado said four persons were missing. They were Benjamin Vestal, 34, and daughter Rhea Patria, 4; Jeros Galabo, 7, and Jenny Abuelo, 9.

Members of the Southern Leyte Emergency Rescue Team, the Pintuyan and San Ricardo police and Air Force divers based in Cebu were scouring the seas to look for the missing.

Gov. Rosette Lerias asked for two helicopters from the 8th Infantry Battalion to help in the rescue operation.

Culpa said she did not know if there was clearance from the Philippine Coast Guard for her boat to sail or if it was overloaded.

"The boat can only accommodate about 100 persons, but during that time, there were more than that number who were on board of ML Jun Jay," Mayor Virginia Mejia told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

Alterado confirmed that the boat exceeded its passenger capacity.

Organizers of the fluvial parade failed to coordinate with the Coast Guard, according to PCG Commandant Vice Adm. Arthur Gosingan.

He directed the convening of the PCG Special Board of Marine Inquiry to investigate the matter. *With reports from Leila Salaverria and Luige del Puerto, in Manila*

War games in Sulu to go on, say Army execs

ZAMBOANGA CITY—DESPITE PROTESTS over the holding of war exercises in Sulu, officials of the US Armed Forces and the Armed Forces of the Philippines were determined to push through with it next month.

US Army Lt. Col. Mark Zimmer, public affairs officer of the Joint Special Operation Task Force Philippines (JSOTFP), told the INQUIRER that about 250 US personnel were expected to arrive in Sulu before the scheduled Balikatan in February.

"Some of them have arrived and doing some assessment, transacting for food and meeting local officials," Zimmer said.

The Balikatan is scheduled to open on Feb. 20, Zimmer said. But Brig. Gen. Benjamin Dolorfino, Southern Command's deputy commander for operation, said the activity will officially start on Feb. 6.

"This Balikatan is purely civil military activity that will last for two weeks," Zimmer said. Dolorfino, on the other hand, said "no war games will be done in this Balikatan, only humanitarian work and this will only last for a month."

American troops, Zimmer said, might stay in Sulu for two months "because packing up equipment entails time."

But Jolo Councilor Temojen Tulawie said the Americans were simply exploiting the word humanitarian mission for their "hidden agenda in Sulu."

Tulawie also expressed fears about the possible abuses and exploitation that US troops might commit on Muslim women, "since not all soldiers are well disciplined, there will be one or two bad eggs in the basket."

But Zimmer said they were overwhelmed with the "warm reception of the people of Sulu and we will not go there if we are not welcomed." *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Malayang III is new head of Silliman U

DUMAGUETE CITY—THE SILLIMAN UNIVERSITY (SU) board of trustees, has selected Dr. Ben Malayang III as the 12th university president and will replace Dr. Agustin Pulido when his term ends on March 26.

Malayang, 52, was chosen from 16 nominees during the SU board of trustees en banc meeting here on Saturday, capping the rigorous selection process that took almost one year.

Malayang, a member of SU High School Class of 1970, graduated with a BA Philosophy from the University of the Philippines, MA Philosophy of Science and Ethics from Ohio University, MA in International Affairs from Ohio University, and Ph.D. in Wildland Resource Science from the University of California.

He is presently a professor of Environmental Science and Management at the University of the Philippines' School of Environmental Science and Management and consultant of the United Nations Development Program.

Malayang was also formerly the undersecretary for environment and research, then later for field operations of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. His expertise includes environmental governance and multilateral environmental agreements, political ecology and biosafety.

Prof. Leonor Magtolis Briones, chair of the SU Board of Trustees, said Malayang got the required two third votes of the trustees during their Dec. 19 meeting in Manila. *Alex Pal, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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Name of Project.	Rental of Heavy Equipment for excavation Dozing, leveling, compacting & soil covering
Project Location:	Calajunan Dumpsite, Brgy. Calajunan Mandurriao, I.C.
Approved Budget for the Contract:	P 6,918,192.00
Source of Fund:	General Fund - 2006
Contract Duration:	214 days
Scope of Work	Rental
Contractor's PCAB License	
Name of Project:	Garbage Collection & Transport Services
Project Location:	Calajunan Dumpsite, Mandurriao, Iloilo City
Approved Budget for the Contract:	P 36,954,060.00
Source of Fund:	General Fund - 2006
Contract Duration:	January 01, to December 31, 2006
Scope of Work.	Garbage Collection
Contractor's PCAB License	

The Schedule of Bidding Activities is as follows:

Period for the Submission of Letter of Intent and Eligibility Forms	Jan. 16 – Feb. 03, 2006
Period for the Issuance of Bid Documents	Feb. 15 – Feb. 20, 2006
Pre-Bid Conference at the City Budget Office Conference Room	February 24, 2006
Last Day of Submission of Bids in Sealed Envelopes (c/o BAC Secretariat)	March 07, 2006
Opening of Bids in Sealed Envelopes at the City Budget Office Conference Room	March 07, 2006

Complete sets of Eligibility Requirements may be obtained from the Office of the BAC Secretariat at the General Services Office, City Hall, Iloilo City. Duly accomplished Eligibility Forms shall be submitted in sealed envelope addressed to the BAC Chairman, c/o BAC Secretariat.

Eligible contractors may obtain the Bid Tender Documents at the Office of the BAC Secretariat, General Services Office, City Hall, Iloilo City upon payment of a non refundable fee of Two Thousand (P 2,000.00) Pesos on the above prescribed period.

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Compactor Truck (Ave. Capacity of 8 cu. m.)	- Twenty (20) Units

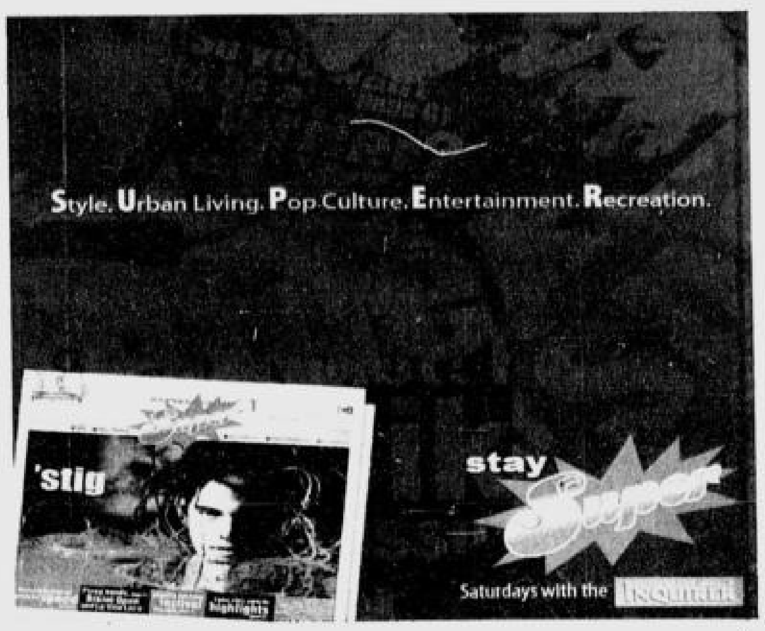
Prospective Bidders shall signify their conformance to the Bidding Terms and Conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution. The criteria to be used by BAC in the Eligibility Check of Prospective Bidders shall be on a non - discretionary "pass/fail"-basis.

The provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations and other applicable rules and regulations shall govern all particulars relative to Eligibility, Bid Bond, Performance bond Pre-Bid Conference, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contract.

The BAC reserves the right to accept or reject all Bids or part thereof, to waive formality therein or to accept such bids or to award any work that is considered most advantageous to the Local Government Unit.

(Sgd.) ATTY. EDGARDO GIL
Chairman, BAC

(PDI--Jan 16 & 23, 2006)



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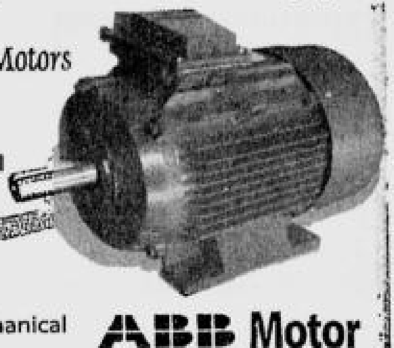

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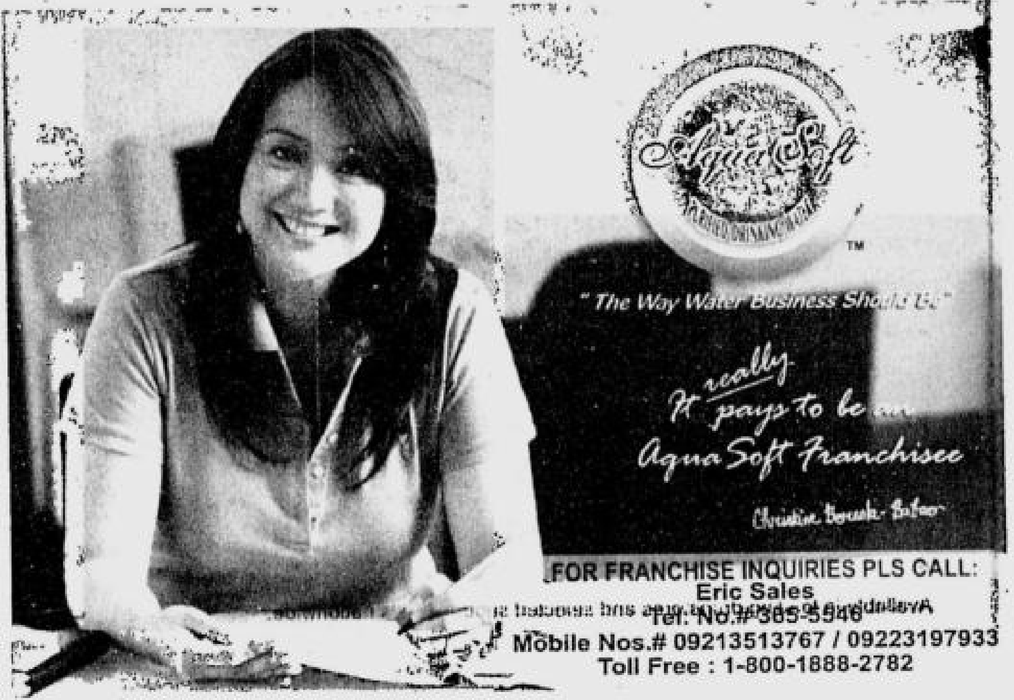

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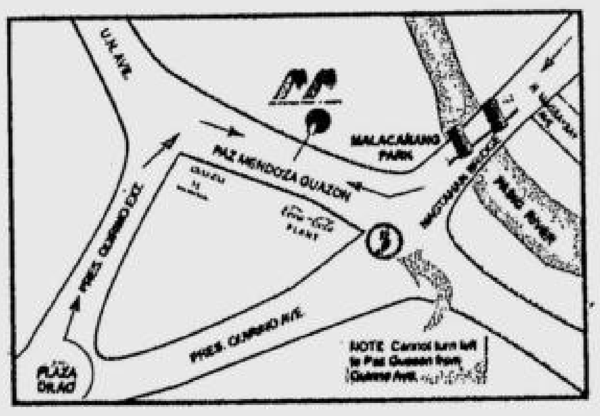
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Sorsogon mayors back 'No-El'

SORSOGON CITY—MAYORS IN Sorsogon will work all-out for a people's initiative and the resetting of the 2007 local elections for 2010, while governors in the region will maintain a wait-and-see attitude on the issue.

Sorsogon Gov. Raul Lee said he and his colleagues would listen first to the proposal of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines on Charter change and make their decision based on its merits.

He said the "ticklish" issue must be studied carefully.

"If the proposal will work for the good of the majority and spur progress in the country, then, of course, we will go for it," the Bicol governors' spokesperson said.

"People's initiative is just one of the means to amend our constitution. It requires the direct participation of the people. If there is no other option left and there's really a need to amend the Constitution, then we'll do it."

Asked about the proposal to scrap the 2007 polls, Lee said this would be self-serving and would benefit incumbent officials like them.

This, he said, "is better left to the people's decision and not to us incumbent officials."

But the mayors are taking a more aggressive stance.

Bulusan Mayor Johnny Guysayko, president of the Sorsogon Mayors' League, said the group's national leaders had come up with a position paper favoring the moving of the elections in 2007 to 2010.

The mayors, he said, saw it fit to reset the polls to give way to the change from presidential to parliamentary form of government.

"The cancellation of the elections will allow our national leaders to settle [the affairs of the government] under a new system and be set free from the hangover of an election," Guysayko said.

He said that if the national leaders would order the launching of a people's initiative, they were bound to follow it. *Bobby Q. Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

WHILE waiting for their group to join the parade in downtown Kalibo, Aklan, children hold onto their Sto. Niño child statues. LYN RILLON

Ati-Atihan Festival security tightened

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

KALIBO, AKLAN—WITH NO trace of the tragedy that struck the Ati-Atihan Festival last year, thousands of Aklanons yesterday flocked to the streets to mark the highlight of the yearly event.

Throngs of revelers gyrated to drum-beats and xylophone chimes as they mingled with soot-covered dancers of Ati tribes snaking around the Pastrana Park, the center of the *sadsad* (street dancing and merrymaking).

Earlier, Kalibo Bishop Jose Romeo Lazo celebrated Mass at the park that was attended by 3,000 devotees. Also present were officials led by Aklan Rep. Florencio Miraflores, Gov. Carlito Marquez and Kalibo Mayor Raymar Rebaldo.

Devotees brought images of the Sto. Niño in various sizes and dressed in colorful robes.

"We hope the celebration will be a religious experience for everyone amid the drum-beatings and revelry," Lazo said in his Homily.

His only reference to last year's killings was when Lazo asked those who attended the Mass to offer a moment of silence for victims of the carnage.

Eight persons were killed and 31 others were wounded when PO1 Jonathan Moreño, a security aide of Supt. Odelardo Magayanes, then Aklan police director, went on a rampage in front of the town police station on Jan. 16, the final day of the festival.

Moreño killed Magayanes, then Kalibo police chief Chief Insp. Manuel Ilejay Jr., SPO1 Juan Gorion, PO2 Ricky Urquiola, PO1 Devy Tompong and two others.

Moreño was gunned down by fellow policemen.

The tragedy shocked Aklanons who considered it the worst crime to have happened in Kalibo, known to be a peaceful town.

Yesterday, the size of the crowd was the same as in previous years. As the Mass ended, Rebaldo led the traditional shouting of "Viva Señor Sto. Niño!" signaling the start of the merrymaking.

The public plaza erupted with the simultaneous beating of drums as revelers poured into the streets.

Security was, however, tight because of the visit of President Macapagal-Arroyo on Saturday.

Marquez said she was the first president to grace the Ati-Atihan.

"I'd like to thank you all for making this festival bigger and bigger each year, thus earning its distinction as the mother of all festivals in the country," Ms Arroyo told the revelers on Saturday noon.

The President briefly joined the revelers after witnessing the traditional *paeapak* healing ritual at the St. John the Baptist Cathedral. ***With a report from Recto I. Vidal, PDI Visayas Bureau***

ROUNDUP

'Hot' logs seized in Pagadian

PAGADIAN CITY—Authorities on Saturday seized at least 6,400 board feet of illegally cut forest lumber in a warehouse here. Officials of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and agents of the National Bureau of Investigation, acting on a search warrant issued by a local judge, found assorted flitches of naturally grown hardwood species in the warehouse owned by Belnvenido Claver. DENR Western Mindanao director Ernesto Adobo said more than 1,000 board feet or a truck load of lumber had been moved out of the place the night before the raid.

Michael Sarcauga, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Vehicles carrying 70 dogs seized

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ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Police intercepted two jeeps loaded with over 70 dogs, which would reportedly be sold in Baguio City and the Ilocos region, at a checkpoint in Lipa City on Friday night. Calabarzon police director Chief Supt. Jesus Verzosa identified the arrested drivers as Nilo de Lloro, 43, and Pastor Escanos, 41; and helpers Danilo Quiray, 28, and Ernesto Villamil, 23, all of Barangay Quilo-Quilo, Padre Garcia, Batangas. Republic Act No. 8485, known as the Animal Welfare Act of 1998, prohibits the sale of dog meat in the country. Tribes who use dog meat in their rituals are, however, exempted.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

DTI sees better Mindanao economy

DAVAO CITY—The Department of Trade and Industry in Southern Mindanao foresees an improved economic scenario this year, especially in Mindanao. Merly Cruz, DTI-11 director, said the export sector in the region alone grew to 7-8 percent last year, up from 3-4 percent in 2004. The growth was driven by major export products, such as banana, mango, coconut, seaweeds and wood.

Judy Quiros, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Limited rice subsidy for pupils

COTABATO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo's limited rice subsidy program to schoolchildren in depressed provinces has so far benefited only Maguindanao in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The project, aimed at staving off hunger and malnutrition among Grade 1 pupils in poor areas, had been allotted P193 million in funds and would run only until March, said ARMM information chief Samson Gogo. In a statement, Gogo said the free one-kilo rice for each pupil would benefit only Maguindanao and Sulu. The latter province was expected to receive its share this month.

Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Sharia justice system backed

DAVAO CITY—The European Commission and the Supreme Court has agreed to cooperate to strengthen the sharia justice system in Mindanao. Under the program, a series of seminars and trainings on sharia and Islamic jurisprudence would be conducted. At least four "capacity building" seminars have been conducted and five sharia courts in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao have been rehabilitated. Secretary Jesus Dureza, presidential peace adviser, said the component was hoped to develop a strong justice system that recognized, promoted and protected the basic rights of internally displaced persons.

Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Lewd dancing denounced

PUERTO GALERA, Oriental Mindoro—Several visitors and local residents said gay shows featuring dirty dancing in open bars near the beach would adversely affect the image of Puerto Galera. Donald Cañete said the lewd attire and movements of the performers must be regulated so as not to offend other tourists. The INQUIRER tried but failed to reach Maximo Caringal, who represents the bars' association. Mayor Aristeo Atienza said his office had been monitoring the gay shows.

Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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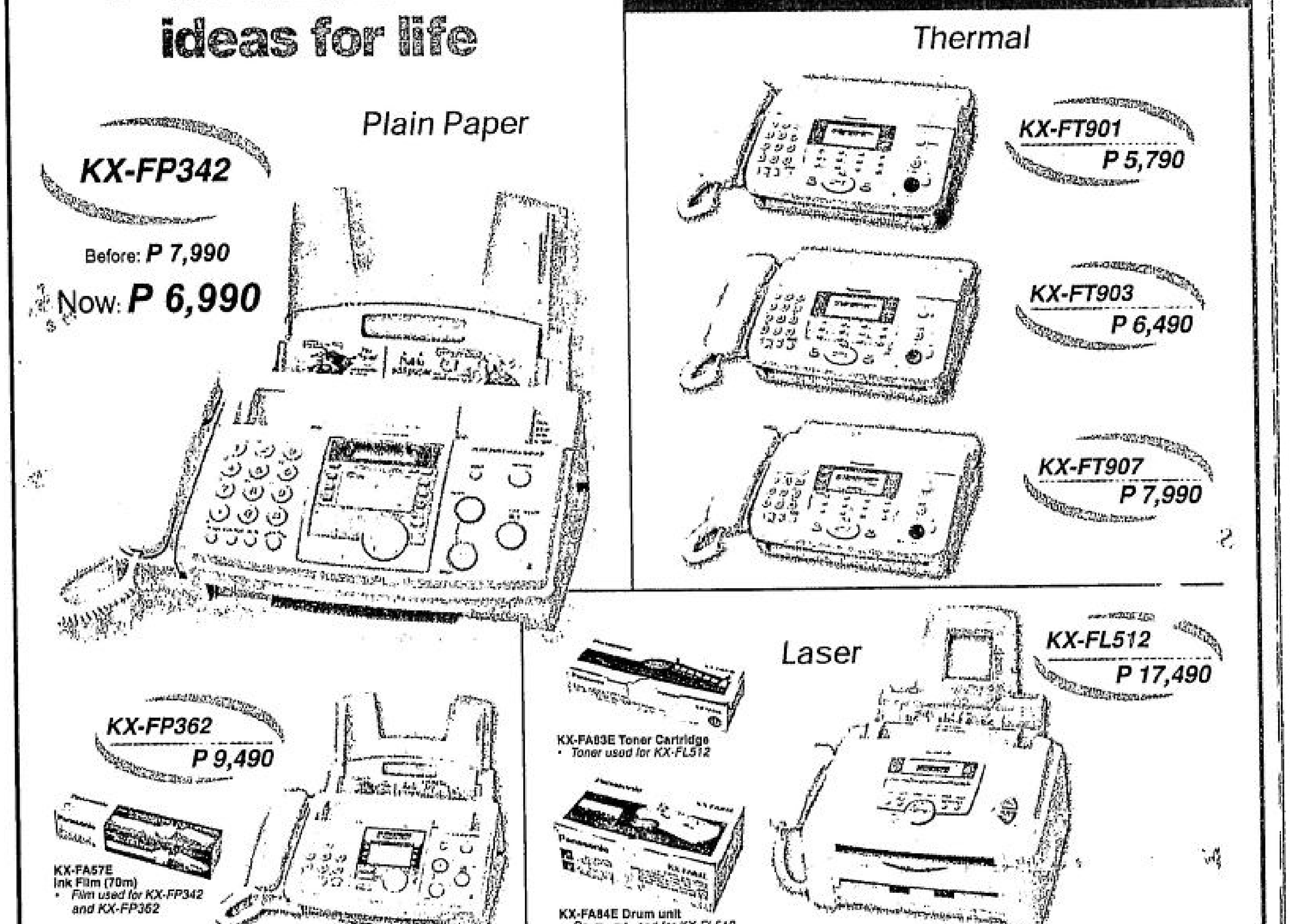

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Rare birds sighted at Candaba Swamp

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CANDABA, PAMPANGA—THREE species of rare migratory birds have been sighted in bigger numbers at the Candaba Swamp here.

Seven purple swamphorns (*Porphyrio porphyrio*), two Chinese pond herons (*Ardeola bacchus*), and 556 black crowned night herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) have been seen, according to the Asian Water Bird Census 2006 by the Wild Bird Club of the Philippines and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

At a single sighting event for the same period last year, the club and the DENR saw only one swamphorn, one pond heron and more than 250 night herons, according to Michael Lu, president of the 130-member bird watchers' club.

Lu said the globally threatened Philippine mallard counted over 1,200 from only about 800 last year.

They were among the 35 species found at only one site stretching about 70 hectares of land in Sitio Doña Simang, Barangay Vizal San Pablo.

The total bird population reached nearly 11,500, a number that Lu found "very high." The international standard is 10,000 for a single area, he said.

"It's too small a site, but the birds are in greater number this year," Lu said.

Asked why this was so, he said the birds tended to flock at the Doña Simang site, comprised of two ponds, because farmers had begun the planting season. The farms were either being fallowed or already bedded with seeds.

These activities disturb the birds that come from October to February to seek winter refuge and to breed at the 32,000-ha swamp that extend to Nueva Ecija and Bulacan.

Lu said the birds had made the ponds their sanctuaries.

Uncultivated as a fishpond during the rainy season and rice farm during the rest of the year, the ponds, owned by Mayor Jerry Pelayo, have naturally nurtured lily plants, like the *tukal*, that are the favorite food of the birds.

The black-crowned night heron, endemic in Indonesia, might have arrived in bigger flocks because of forest fires in that country. They have shown signs of breeding in the Philippines and have become residents as well, Lu said.

Lu said the migratory birds had not yet found to be free from the avian influenza virus. But tests done on migratory birds in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore showed that they birds were not carriers of the fatal disease now transmitted among humans.

"If they (birds) are sick, they'll be hard put by exhaustion to reach their destinations," he said.

Neither did the creatures show signs of mixing with domestic fowls, he said, citing the open duck farms from the stretch of Barangay San Agustin to Vizal San Pablo.

The Candaba Swamp is one of the three important wetlands in the Philippines. It is also home to various reptiles, insects and plants.

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INVITATION TO APPLY
FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the projects as stated below:

ITB No.	Item / Description	Approved Budget	Source of Funds
2005-333 (2)	1 lot Supply and Delivery of the following: • 50 Metaframe Presentation Server, Enterprise Edition for Windows-x-1 Concurrent User Connection Pack with Subscription Advantage • 1 Metaframe Presentation Server 4.0 for Windows-English Mediakit • 1 CITRIX Standard Support Agreement - APAC	P 2,265,000.00	LBP Funds

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/ Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

Bidding for the above requirements is scheduled on February 1, 2006 at 1:00 PM and pertinent Bid Documents may be obtained from the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila, **upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00.**

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on **January 20, 2006** at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to **Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).**

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare the bidding a failure or waive any required formality therein and make an award to the bidder whose bid is the most advantageous to the Bank.

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region - IX Western Mindanao, Zamboanga City
Tel. Nos. (062) 9911828, (062) 9850884, Fax No. (062) 9911339

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Food Authority, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites all interested Labor Services' Contractor, to apply for eligibility and to bid for the in-warehouse handling of the 2006 NFA imported/local rice and/or palay at the following areas:

Warehouse/Province	Estimated Volume (In bags of 50 kg.)	Approved Rate per bag of 50 kg.	Approved Budget (In Pesos)
1. Taway GID Whse, Ipil ZS	232,000	2.00	464,000.00
2. Gulawa Whse, Malangas ZS	148,000	2.00	296,000.00
3. Tiguma GID Whses, Pag. ZDS	410,000	1.75	717,500.00
4. Culo GID Whse, Molave, ZDS	90,000	1.75	157,500.00
5. Gulayon GID, Whse, ZDN	452,000	2.00	904,000.00
6. FSC Whse, S. Osmeña, ZDN	34,000	2.00	68,000.00
7. Liluban Whse, Siocon ZDN	36,000	2.00	72,000.00
TOTAL	1,402,000		2,679,000.00

All labor contractors interested to participate in the bidding must be registered/accredited with NFA. Application forms for eligibility to bid, list of eligibility requirements and bid documents shall be issued upon submission of Letter of Intent to participate and payment of a nonrefundable fee of Php 3,500.00 to the NFA in Zamboanga City on the scheduled date and time stated below.

Prospective bidders should have the experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use nondiscretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR)

Schedule of bidding activities:

Particulars	Date and Time
• Last Day of Application for Registration/renewal of interested bidders who are not NFA accredited cargo handling operators or with expired registration	January 18, 2006 / 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
• Issuance of application forms for eligibility and list of eligibility requirements, submission of Letter of Intent & Issuance of Bid forms	January 12-13; 16-18, 2006
• Pre-Bid Conference*	January 19, 2006 / 2:00 P.M.
• Opening of Bids*	February 3, 2006 / 2:00 P.M.
• Bid Evaluation	February 6-7, 2006
• Post-Qualification	February 8-13, 2006
• Notice of Award	February 14, 2006

* Venue will be at the NFA Conference Room, Gov. Ramos Ave., San Roque, Zambo. City.

The National Food Authority assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

(Sgd) ROLANDO M. MARAVILLA
OIC - Office of the ARM, and
Chairman, NFA-IX BAC

(PDI - January 9 and 16, 2006)

Lakas plans ...

From page A1

people's initiative not later than March 22, 2006 *(See "In the Know")*.

During the caucus, there was also a heated debate on another document, "Option B with Timeline."

The document states that "if elections are approved for May 2007, elected members of parliament (MPs) will assume office on June 30, 2007, and immediately thereafter, the parliament elects the prime minister and the president."

"In the interim, between June 30, 2006, to June 30, 2007, the incumbent President continues to function as both head of state and government who shall organize a government of national unity," it said.

The same document says that the new parliament is expected to be fully in place and functioning by June 30, 2007, or immediately thereafter.

Option B

As the discussion dragged on, the proposal on the election of a president by parliament under Option B was changed.

Ilocos Sur Gov. Chavit Singson stressed the need to allow Ms Arroyo to continue her term until 2010 to dispel accusations that she had cheated in the May 2004 presidential election, as alleged in the Virgilio Garcillano wiretapping controversy.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay seconded, and presented a motion "to allow GMA to finish her term" to sustain the country's growth and economy.

Cagayan de Oro City Rep. Constantino Jaraula, however, corrected Pichay and suggested that the word "to allow" be stricken out and replaced with "finish her term."

Outgoing Environment Secretary Michael Defensor agreed, saying the motion was a reaffirmation of the party's confidence in the President, who is also its chair.

Ms Arroyo has repeatedly stated that she has a mandate to serve out her term until 2010 but that she would yield to a shortened tenure if this was constitutionally sanctioned.

A statement of consensus released at the close of the caucus said the directorate meeting was concluded on "a high note of confidence, solidarity, teamwork and discipline" and with a firm resolve to establish political stability and sustain economic growth under a united party leadership.

It also said Ms Arroyo, former President Fidel Ramos, chair emeritus, and De Venecia, party president, affirmed their abiding unity and pledged to lead the party as a solid triumvirate.

Victory on 3 fronts

"Collectively and individually, the three leaders expressed their resolve not to allow current political differences to create any rift nor project any image or impression of disunity among them," the statement said.

The party likewise supported Ms Arroyo's call to achieve victory on three fronts—sustaining economic gains, effecting Charter change, and fighting poverty to bring the people to a higher level of productivity, sufficiency and dignity.

Ed Malay, Ramos' media consultant, said Ramos would abide by the statement of consensus since he was one of those who drafted it during the caucus.

Two Lakas sources said one of the options that the Arroyo administration could take in order to meet the timeline was for the President to call a special session of Congress during one of the legislative breaks in order to convene it as a constituent assembly.

One source, who asked not to be named because he was involved in the negotiations, said this was discussed in the national directorate meeting by Speaker Jose de Venecia.

The Senate and the House have yet to act on the proposed joint resolution of Congress to convene as a constituent assembly.

Special session

When asked about this, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez acknowledged that this was "one of the ideas presented, but this needed to be studied."

Lakas Rep. Monico Puentebella said the party should first exhaust all means to get the Senate to join the House in moving to amend the Charter and the calling of a special session should be the last option.

Puentebella said Lakas will hold a caucus today—first among its members in the House and then with its coalition partners to discuss the proposed Charter changes.

Another option that needed to be studied was the people's initiative that local government officials were pursuing in order to hasten Charter change, said Gonzalez.

He said he would be meeting with officials of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines to discuss the matter.

IN THE KNOW

FOLLOWING IS THE proposed Lakas-CMD timeline for the shift to a parliamentary system:

March 22, 2006: Approval of seven constitutional amendments by constituent assembly or people's initiative.

April 3: Start of information campaign on constitutional amendments.

June 2: Plebiscite on two questions, to be answered by "Yes" or "No": (1) Do you approve of the amendments? (2) Do you want elections for all elective officials under the parliamentary system in May 2007 (or May 2010)?

June 30: Transformation to interim parliamentary government.

June 2007 or June 2010, depending on final submission and result of plebiscite): Incumbent President winds up functions as head of state and head of the government.

Senators to GMA: Don't dictate to us

From page A1

was present in the meeting," he noted.

He said that he, House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles and Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. proposed at the meeting that "the President may also meet with Lakas senators for a meeting of minds."

Sen. Edgardo Angara has already confirmed his attendance, saying the emerging consensus among some senators is to take part in the formation of a new form of government bereft of the gridlock and corruption that characterize the present setup.

But Pichay said the chances that a new Charter would be approved this year were nil. "We can't talk about any timetable. My feet are still on the ground. Without the participation and cooperation of the Senate, we can't talk about Charter change," he said.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said the Senate would not be stampeded into amending the Constitution just because Lakas wanted the amendments.

"The more they try to intimidate the Senate, the more the Senate will resist," Pangilinan said.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said Ms Arroyo would not succeed with her timetable.

Debates to take time

This early, Senator Arroyo predicted that the timeline set by the triumvirate for constitutional change would "not work."

"The Senate, as a matter of legislative procedure, must first debate and decide, before anything else, whether it's amenable to amending or revising the Constitution. That will first go to Gordon's committee on constitutional amendments, where the debate will be extensive and long," he said.

"If it gets past the committee, even more extensive debates on the floor will follow. That will take a long, long time," the senator said.

Other senators also questioned the basis for the interim parliamentary government being cooked up by the administration-dominated House of Representatives, indicating that this would be junked by the upper chamber.

"What will be the basis for that? The 1987 Constitution does not provide for that," Sen. Rodolfo Biazon said wryly yesterday.

Gordon echoed his colleague's view. "You can't have an interim parliamentary government simply because you say it. It will entail constitutional change. But the people are not willing to accept it," he said in an interview.

He said constitutional change would not happen without Senate approval. "The Senate will oppose it because it will not benefit the nation, but only a few."

Rehash of Marcos idea

Pimentel branded the proposal a rehash of Ferdinand Marcos' proposed interim national assembly in the early '70s.

"They're trying a Marcos formula that did not work for us," he said in an interview, recalling that Marcos used as a come-on the lawmakers' automatic membership in the assembly.

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraula, chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments, had drawn up a "working draft" of a proposed charter that would allow Ms Arroyo to delegate "little by little" her powers to a prime minister during the transition from the presidential to a parliamentary system.

Senator Arroyo said the Senate would not be bound by a House resolution seeking to convene Congress into a constituent assembly.

"The troika's attempt is so patently clear that it's tailor-made to insure their continued stay in power, rather than an honest-to-goodness move to provide an effective constitutional mechanism for good governance," he said.

CHA-CHA TROIKA. President Arroyo is flanked by former President Fidel V. Ramos and Speaker Jose de Venecia during the Lakas-NUCD national directorate meeting in Malacañang. EDWIN BACASMAS

Three modes

There are three modes for amending the Constitution—a constituent assembly (composed of the members of Congress), constitutional convention (members are elected) and a people's initiative.

In the people's initiative, a petition for amendments requires the signatures of at least 12 percent of the total number of registered voters and at least 3 percent of every district's registered voters.

Gordon's committee starts on Wednesday its hearings on a House resolution seeking to convene Congress into a constituent assembly and a Senate resolution calling for a constitutional convention to study and approve amendments to the Charter.

Gordon cited two options by which the administration could try to get around the Senate's strong opposition to Charter change.

One, the Arroyo administration, through its allies, would push for a bill to implement a people's initiative, which may be approved by a simple majority.

Two, the administration would "create" its own constituent assembly by inviting allies in the House and Senate to attend and pretend they had the three-fourths vote.

Supreme Court

If challenged, the administration would claim that the Constitution did not provide for the two chambers to vote separately, and hope that the Supreme Court would side with it, according to Gordon.

Under a constituent assembly, any amendment to the Constitution must be approved by a three-fourths vote of the House of Representatives and of the Senate, voting separately.

Former Sen. Heherson Alvarez, a member of 1971 Constitutional Convention who attended the Lakas national directorate meeting, said the House could not go it alone because the intent of the Constitution was for two chambers to vote separately.

"The Supreme Court will eventually side with the Senate. The move will be lost," Alvarez said.

Numbers game

In the 24-seat Senate, 18 votes are needed to approve any amendment. Since there are 23 senators at present, only six votes would be needed to reject it.

Senator Arroyo had said that Ms Arroyo and Ramos could get the support of six senators on Charter change, while Gordon said the administration could convince "seven or eight senators at the most" to support the initiative.

Members of the seven-member Senate opposition bloc, led by Pimentel, among others, are expected to vote against Charter change, according to Gordon.

As early as Thursday last week, De Venecia was already declaring that proponents of Charter change were on the "eve of victory."

The Speaker maintained that eight senators, including Pimentel, Angara, Manuel Villar, Juan Ponce Enrile, Manuel "Lito" Lapid and Ralph Recto, would readily support a constituent assembly.

FVR now says he's flexible on GMA term limit

From page A1

The resolution ostensibly dealt a blow to Ramos' efforts to bring closure to questions on the legitimacy of the Arroyo administration. The issue was prompted by the release last July of wiretapped conversations suggesting Ms Arroyo had manipulated the 2004 presidential election.

Paramount interest

"You know, I have been consistent in saying that whatever I'm doing now is not for my own benefit or ego, neither of any political leader. My paramount interest has always been the country," Ramos said.

"What is important to remember here is that the accelerated timeline for Charter change incorporating seven proposed amendments will be pursued by the party. That is where the unanimity comes in," said the Lakas-CMD chair emeritus.

Ramos did not regard the party decision a personal political setback. "No, these things develop in their own way according to the plays, and inputs and outputs of the other players who were not there," he said.

"Do not forget, the target is the very long range one, it's the national interest under a new system of government. Now all of those that are involved in promoting the system must perform because a new constitution will not solve our problems automatically. Performance is the key," he said.

Ramos described himself as among "the bystanders in the private sector."

"It's not anymore my administration. Mine is done," said Ramos.

Primary objective

An aide close to Ramos said that despite the Lakas-CMD consensus on Ms Arroyo's term, the former general was satisfied that at the very least, constitutional change appeared close to happening.

"I think his primary objective is to have Charter change," the aide, who requested anonymity, said. The source stressed that this had been Ramos' position since his presidency in the 1990s.

The source said Ms Arroyo's term of office remained the "contentious issue" which would be left for Congress to decide.

Ramos expressed satisfaction at the moves to amend the Constitution, noting that this was a far cry from July 8 last year, when Ms Arroyo faced mounting calls for her to resign.

"On July 8, 2005, just six months ago, was there hope for constitutional change at that point? No, very little. Only a few, including myself, were pushing it," Ramos said.

Senate softens?

Ramos noted that another positive development was the scheduling today of a hearing by Senate President Franklin Drilon on the resolution on proposed Charter changes that was passed by the House of Representatives. This measure will be debated by the committee on constitutional amendments.

"The Senate has softened a bit. That will start the debate with public hearings, which is good," Ramos said.

Administration allies who attended Saturday's caucus said the meeting showed Ms Arroyo's support in the party was "solid as a rock."

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said Ramos knew that the party had spoken and "he accepted it."

"He is our guru, elder statesman, and he won't break from the party he founded and worked so hard to keep afloat," Nograles said. "He will be our guide in Charter change." *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac and Christine O. Avendaño*

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Persons with AIDS get priestly comfort

From page A1

ure to Nita throughout her confinement at San Lazaro.

"If only he told her he was sick, they would not have had another daughter. She was totally clueless about his condition," the priest said.

Leaving in peace

But Father Gennie knows the woman would be leaving in peace.

Long before she lapsed into a coma more than a week ago, Nita had accepted her fate, repeatedly telling the priest: "Father, I have full trust in the Lord."

"I'm really impressed with her," he told the INQUIRER in an interview on Thursday. "Here's a woman who couldn't cling on to anything anymore. She was worrying about her children. She was just counting her days. Yet she could still say, 'I trust in God.'"

The 42-year-old priest met Nita early last year. Part of his job as magistral chaplain of the Order of Malta in the Philippines brought him to the AIDS patients confined at San Lazaro.

Strengthen spirit

He says it's not an easy apostolate even if the group, which traces its roots to medieval Europe, was used to hospital work. Its concern, he says, goes beyond the medical, even if its members include doctors and nurses.

"We saw that it's OK to provide medication, but the patient needs more," he said. "We strengthen their spirit, so with the spirits of our members who help them."

Father Gennie knew what to do when he met Nita one morning in San Lazaro. Already pale and weak owing to regular blood transfusions, the woman was suffering more from abandonment and betrayal.

Rashes

Never did her partner tell her that he was sick, in fact dying of AIDS, the priest recalls Nita telling him in one of his visits. But just when the man thought he had brought his secret to the grave, she saw his death certificate and she was devastated.

That explained the strange rashes and her generally deteriorating condition. The same signs are now all over her daughter, too. She has been taking antiretrovirals. But relatives were told that children, with their still developing immune system, had no real chance of fighting a protracted battle against AIDS.

Except for an aunt, no one among Nita's relatives, not even her aging mother, knows about the tragedy. Father Gennie says she's probably trying to protect them from the social stigma by keeping the burden to herself.

The last time he visited her on Dec. 29, the priest saw an abandoned woman. He was told she was dying and was summoned to give the last sacraments.

She had spent Christmas alone because her aunt had to be with her own family. There was only another male AIDS patient at Pavilion 4.

Favorite carols

Father Gennie made up for the absence by granting what would be Nita's final Christmas wish. A week before Christmas, he dropped by with two Cenacle nuns who sang Nita's favorite carols.

Nita and her daughter's situation is not unusual. At recent seminars on AIDS, experts reported that many more Filipinos like them were dying simply because of their partners' infidelity.

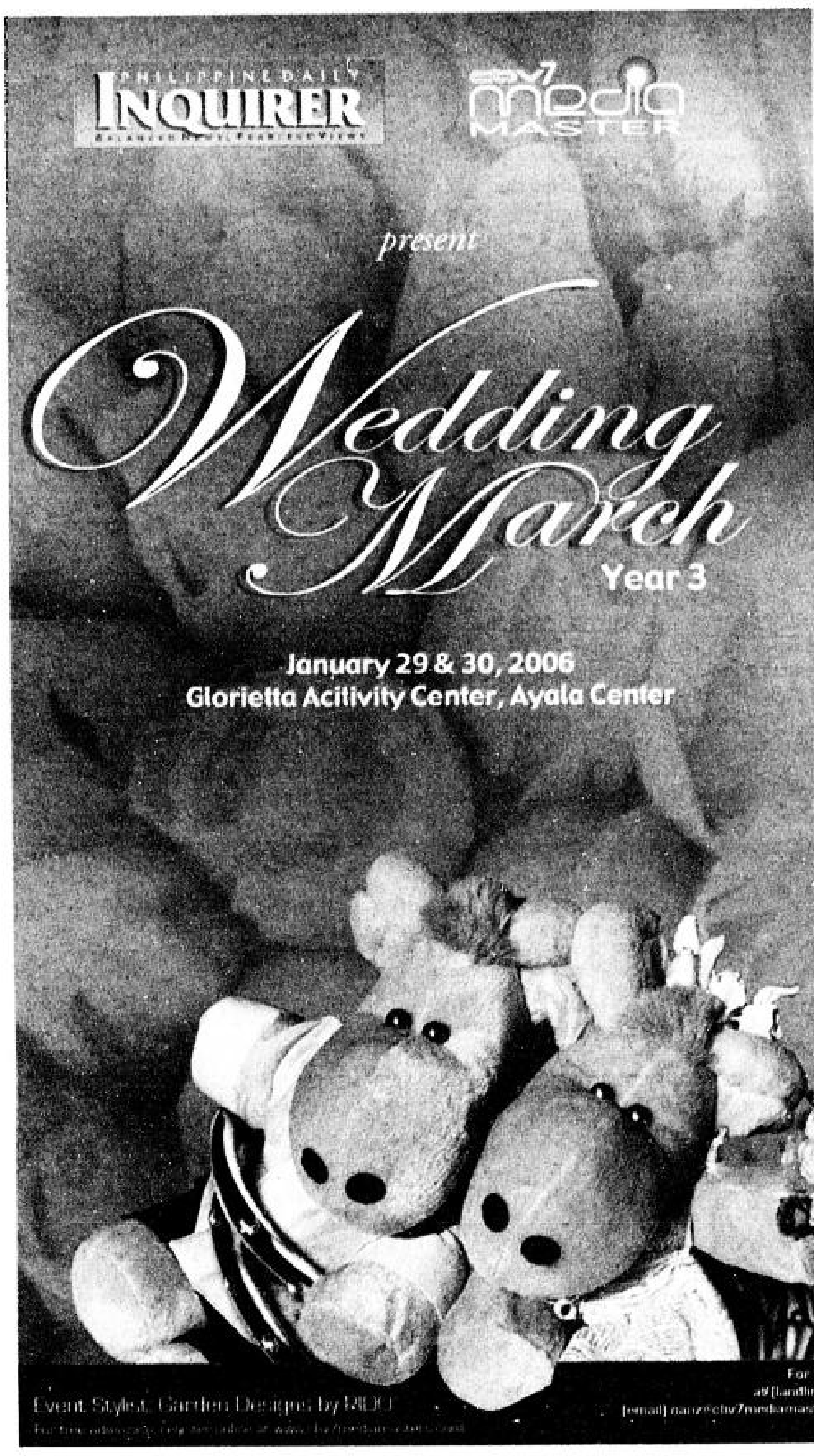
Blind and repentant

A woman in her 30s visited Father Gennie just last week. She had been infected by her husband, also a seafarer. He has gone completely blind and is now a suffering repentant. He is getting unconditional care from the same woman he had cheated on and infected.

Quite fortunately for the couple, none of their three young daughters are sick. Right now, their main concern is to delay the inevitable for their children's sake.

"You can no longer change what is there so we should just maximize the possibilities to do good by forgiving and accepting the suffering in union with Christ," the priest said.

"Parents should see that whatever decision they take would affect not only them but their children, too."



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Viet 'pho' soup empire …

From page A1

meat, rice noodles, herbs and spices.

On this simple but legendary staple dish, one family is trying to build a culinary empire in the same way Americans turned the humble hamburger into the world's most common fast food.

Launched in June 2003, the Pho24 chain already has 20 restaurants in Vietnam and one in the Indonesian capital Jakarta. Each one cooks between 400 and 500 bowls of pho every day.

The group hopes to open another outlet in Jakarta and expand to Australia, Singapore, Japan, Malaysia and the Philippines this year.

The concept is simple. "A modern restaurant keeping Vietnamese authenticity, with a traditional, delicious and healthy dish," says Ly Qui Trung, general manager and a shareholder in the chain with his mother and four brothers and sisters.

A WAITER prepares to serve bowls of "pho" to customers at a Pho24 restaurant in downtown Hanoi. AFP

New generation

An elegant and amiable native of the former Saigon with an infectious smile, the 39-year-old Trung typifies a new generation of Vietnamese entrepreneurs.

Like them, Trung left Vietnam to study abroad where he learned the workings of the modern market economy before returning home to use this knowledge and, as Trung stresses, "do something for the success of [the] country."

Trung is never very far from the nationalist pride dormant in almost every Vietnamese.

"I would like the Vietnamese people to be proud of Pho24 and for young people to say: 'Oh, that guy began as a waiter and a receptionist. Now he manages a chain with a presence abroad,'" he says enthusiastically.

The success of his operation is, he says, also a question of culture, in the face of competition from the large American fast-food chains.

Chicken and burgers

In the southern commercial center of Ho Chi Minh City, KFC is already doing well, further fueling Trung's ambition to succeed.

"Otherwise, one day, all the young people will go to KFC or McDonald's," he says, although the golden arches of the burger chain have yet to be seen in Vietnam.

The idea of Pho24 came to him on a plane journey in 2002 when his neighboring passenger, an Australian, told him he was searching for good *pho* restaurants in Asia.

Four years later, his ambition is to become a tycoon of this traditional soup which is a real calling card for the local cuisine along with spring rolls and green papaya salad. He is even hoping to put the soup business on the stock market within five years.

"I dream of turning Pho24 into a big Asian group," he says. "After Asia, the second stage would be the United States."

Sweet irony

In Vietnam, an efficient businessman needs political acquaintances. Trung knows it. Pho24 is on a list of the 20 brands which will benefit from state aid for training and promotion abroad, via magazines and exhibitions.

Receiving help from a communist government is a pretty irony for this son of Ly Qui Chung, who was information minister for the last government of South Vietnam for three days in April 1975.

At the end of the war, with the whole country having fallen under the iron rule of the northern Communists, Trung's family had to start again from scratch. His mother opened a street canteen with some tables and plastic chairs and his father started working again as a sports journalist.

Fifteen years later, a customer of the hotel where Trung was working as a receptionist helped him leave to study in an Australian university, later completing his course in the United States.

Soup's on

After working as general manager of a hotel on his return, Trung then joined Nam An, the business his family had set up in the meantime. The group today has eight restaurants, cafés and ice-cream parlors in Vietnam and an establishment in Bangkok, to which are added "Pho24," their latest creation.

"We looked for a name easy to remember. Pho24 reflects the 24 ingredients used in this dish and the 24 hours needed to prepare it," explains Trung, who also plans eventually to keep his restaurants open around the clock.

It was necessary to work out a recipe which was acceptable to southern and northern Vietnamese as well as foreigners.

"We wanted a completely new *pho*, less sweet and with less fat than the southern one, and less salty than the northern one. Every morning, during one year, we did tests," says Trung.

Franchising

As for the decor of the restaurants, Trung says, "It keeps traditional elements as we want customers to feel they are still in a *pho* store."

Simple decor, a modest space and a standardized cuisine—these are the three pillars of the Pho24 business model.

Of the 20 establishments, half are franchises—Trung wrote and published a book on the concept—but with a 30-percent stake from the head office, which ensures they follow to the letter the principles of the chain.

At the end of 2008, Pho24 hopes to have 97 restaurants in Vietnam, 70 percent as franchises.

Bun 'n' roll

"We want to become one of the main players of quick service restaurants in the country," said Trung.

The entrepreneur is teeming with other ideas.

"A chain of Springrolls24 dedicated to spring rolls and BunCha24 devoted to the traditional dish of noodles and meatballs," Trung says.

He can't stop himself from smiling as he lists the names. He has already registered them as trademarks. *AFP*

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'Pondo' winning war on hunger

By Volt Contreras

A QUICK HUG AND YOU'LL KNOW THAT THE Pondo ng Pinoy feeding program—a project for malnourished children—has been a success.

The kids, who were skin and bones six months ago, have filled out nicely and are lovely to hug.

The program, launched last year with the blessing of Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, is run by volunteers who have been preparing free meals for the children five days a week for the past six months.

The Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Novaliches, Quezon City is the first of 46 communities in Metro Manila participating in the nutrition drive.

A group of villagers in their 50s and 60s gamely show the INQUIRER how it's done.

Mondays to Fridays, Susie Zipagan and her peers in Barangay Sta. Monica spend at least four hours—from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.—cooking and cleaning up in a makeshift kitchen and then serving meals in a covered court which doubles as a mess hall for some 30 preschool children. The tiny tots who live around the village are all documented malnutrition cases.

"I have a catering business which is doing well," says Zipagan, 60. "But doing this makes me feel complete and happy."

One of many

The free feeding program is actually just one of the many thrusts of Pondo ng Pinoy, the others being education, livelihood and the pursuit of social justice. The Catholic Church launched the fund-raiser on June 12, 2004, urging the faithful to donate even loose change for anti-poverty projects.

The feeding component, dubbed the "Hapag-Asa Integrated Nutrition Program," was launched in July last year.

Under Hapag-Asa, Pondo allots P7.50 per meal per child daily, while the implementing parish is expected to supplement this either in cash or kind (additional food items, cooking utensils, transport, fuel, manpower, etc.)

According to official health surveys cited by Pondo, three out of 10 Filipino children of preschool ages suffer from chronic malnutrition.

"It costs P900 or just P7.50 a day to feed a malnourished child for six months," the program says in its fund-raising brochure.

"This amount is nominal. What can you really buy with P7.50?" notes Levi Buenafe, the Parish Pastoral Council chair of the Our Lady of Mercy.

"What's important is that something beautiful got started. By nature, Filipinos love to pitch in," he says.

Spirit of volunteerism

When the INQUIRER paid a visit last week, it was this spirit of volunteerism that filled the makeshift kitchen run by Zipagan and company—not the simmering pork *sinigang*.

As the head social service coordinator of the parish, Zipagan reported that her team had never missed a feeding day for the last six months—even during holidays or when classes were suspended because of bad weather.

And unlike other short-lived feeding programs, Pondo had consistently served "heavy meals" unlike other soup-and-bread lines.

Zipagan agreed that the key to keeping up the program on a tireless level was, ironically, the senior age of the volunteers, debunking the common notion that community service projects were best handled by the young.

"I don't think it would have lasted this long if it were run by younger volunteers who have regular jobs or classes to attend. Can you imagine spending almost half of your day here without expecting anything in return?" Zipagan said in Filipino.

Rewards

The good news is, according to a chart furnished by Hapag-Asa project officer Bell Lafuente, the previously underweight children of Barangay Sta. Monica have gained between "2 to 4 kilos" since they started the program in July.

These children comprise the first batch of Hapag-Asa beneficiaries whose "graduation" is set on Jan. 31, according to Lafuente.

This accomplishment, however, goes beyond the kids' health.

Buenafe muses: "We saw a community getting things done. We realized that all we needed was somebody—or something—to provide us the initiative."

A BOY eats his lunch with gusto at a barangay in Novaliches, Quezon City. Thanks to the Pondo ng Pinoy feeding program being run by enthusiastic volunteers, he and other children, all documented malnutrition cases, have gained 2 to 4 kilos in the past six months. JOAN BONDOC

CARACOL FESTIVAL

Makati residents danced up a storm yesterday as they celebrated this year's Caracol Festival, the city's version of the Mardi Gras. Participants in a grand parade along Ayala Avenue came in colorful Mother Earth-inspired costumes, all in line with the festival's theme of promoting the importance of preserving the environment. RODEL ROTONI

Search launched for 'Pinoy Barbie'

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE SEARCH IS ON FOR THE "Pinoy Barbie."

The Muntinlupa City government is promising a cash prize of P25,000 to any Filipino who would be able to come up with the winning design for the first Filipino doll that would reflect the country's rich cultural background.

"Some countries with a very rich cultural heritage have their respective souvenir dolls. The Philippines doesn't have any. It's about time that we have our own," Mayor Jaime Fresnedi told the INQUIRER.

The "Philippine Doll" contest is open to all legitimate Filipino residents who are at least 12 years old.

Participant should submit a dummy or scale model of their entry, at least 18 inches high, together with blue prints and sketches. A participant can submit up to three entries.

The doll must be original and uniquely Filipino in design. It should also be easy to market and mass-produce. "The winning entry will be patented," Fresnedi said.

The winner will receive a cash prize of P25,000, the second place winner will get P15,000 and the third placer, P10,000. The local government will accept entries until Feb. 15.

Dorm fire tragedy could have been avoided

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE DEATH OF EIGHT PEOPLE during a dormitory fire in Sampaloc, Manila last week could have been prevented if the firemen only had the right tools, according to the spokesperson of a nationwide group of firefighters.

"We all know that these dormitories are virtual death traps because of the lack of fire escapes and proper ventilation," said Alvin Estrada, spokesperson of the United Firefighters of the Philippines, a nongovernment organization composed of 13,000 firefighters, in an interview with the INQUIRER.

Estrada explained that the firefighters should have been equipped with the necessary tools to break into locked rooms to save trapped victims.

He said the "jaws of life," a hydraulically driven tool, can force open jammed doors in a few minutes, while a portable jackhammer can bore holes in walls to allow firefighters entry.

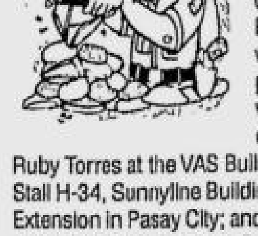
METROBRIEFS

Turf war heats up

INTELLIGENCE officers of the Makati Police Department (MPD) yesterday arrested a traffic enforcer of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) after the latter apprehended a motorist at the intersection of Ayala Avenue and Edsa for beating a red light. Eddie Cruz, 42, an MMDA Traffic Operations Center enforcer for the past 10 years, was taken to the MPD headquarters where he underwent questioning. Cruz was the first to be arrested after Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay last week ordered city policemen and public service officers to arrest any MMDA traffic enforcer caught apprehending motorists in his area. The arresting officers said they were still trying to determine what charges to file against Cruz. "If you are arrested, you should immediately be told what charges you are being arrested on . . . I think it [Binay's arrest order] is a little off, a little unusual. It may be a violation of some rights of individuals and some administrative rules," said MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando. He added that the MMDA would provide legal assistance to Cruz.

Tarra V. Quismundo

Fake underwear seized



MURA NA MANGANGATI KA PA!

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) seized 7,095 pieces of fake Nautica underwear worth P1.06 million during simultaneous raids in the cities of Parañaque and Pasay last week. The counterfeit products were taken from warehouses and stalls owned by George Tan and Ruby Torres at the VAS Building Compound and in Stall H-34, Sunnyline Building, both on Taft Avenue Extension in Pasay City; and at 26 Boeing St., Concorde Village, Nala Road, Parañaque City. NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division agent Joseph Furing said trademark infringement and unfair competition charges are now being readied against Tan and Torres.

Margaux C. Ortiz

No tax hike

NO TAX hike will be implemented in Valenzuela City this year. "(The plan to) increase the city's tax rates is to be held in abeyance until the economic condition improves," Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian announced recently. Gatchalian said the plan to raise taxes this year, as contained in an ordinance, would be untimely because of the current financial crisis. He added that his constituents were already having a hard time coping with the higher cost of living due to the recent implementation of the expanded value added tax. "The yearlong reprieve would give business owners and residents of the city some 'breathing space'," Gatchalian said.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Taxi driver killed

A TAXI driver was robbed of his earnings and stabbed dead by unidentified assailants who likely posed as passengers before dawn yesterday in Quezon City. Hernani Labong, 47, of Norzagaray, Bulacan, was found dead inside his taxi, with plate number PWT 674, at 1:30 a.m. along Belfast Avenue, Pasong Putik, Fairview. His body was found by barangay watchmen. In his report, PO2 Gregorio Maramag, of the criminal investigation division of the Quezon City Police District, said the motive was likely robbery since Labong's wallet and earnings were missing.

DJ Yap

LTO cites QC

SMOKE belchers had better stay out of Quezon City which has received a citation from the Land Transportation Office (LTO) for catching the most number of smoke belchers in 2005. A total of 5,606 transport operators and drivers were apprehended last year by the city's anti-smoke belching unit under the local Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department (EPWMD). For its accomplishment, the LTO awarded Quezon City a certificate of recognition as the "LTO Law Enforcement Group of the Year." On the other hand, Michael Santos, an enforcer of the city's anti-smoke belching unit, was named "LTO Law Enforcement Officer of the Year" for his "unstinting dedication and unqualified support" for the agency's anti-pollution program.

DJ Yap

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Barako take 2-0 cushion; Express win

By June Navarro

JAMES PENNY FINISHED A block shy of a triple-double as Red Bull Barako seized a commanding 2-0 lead over Alaska, 80-73, in their best-of-five quarterfinal series in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Penny had 20 points on top of 16 rebounds and nine blocks as he continued to justify his selection as last-minute replacement for the high-scoring Quemont Greer at the start of the series.

In swatting away nine shots, Penny nearly matched the 10 blocks pulled off by Shell's Benjie Paras in a game during the 1991 season.

Yancy De Ocampo pounded the lanes and helped Air21 carve out a 90-87 series equalizer over Talk 'N Text earlier.

Joining forces with his younger brother, Ranidel, the 6-foot-9 De Ocampo banged in 12 points and grabbed 11 rebounds against his former team, a far cry from his 5.6-point and 5.7-rebound conference average.

"I just wanted to help our team win in any way I can," said De Ocampo, who was shipped by the Phone Pals in the off-season to the Express in exchange for top rookie pick Anthony Washington.

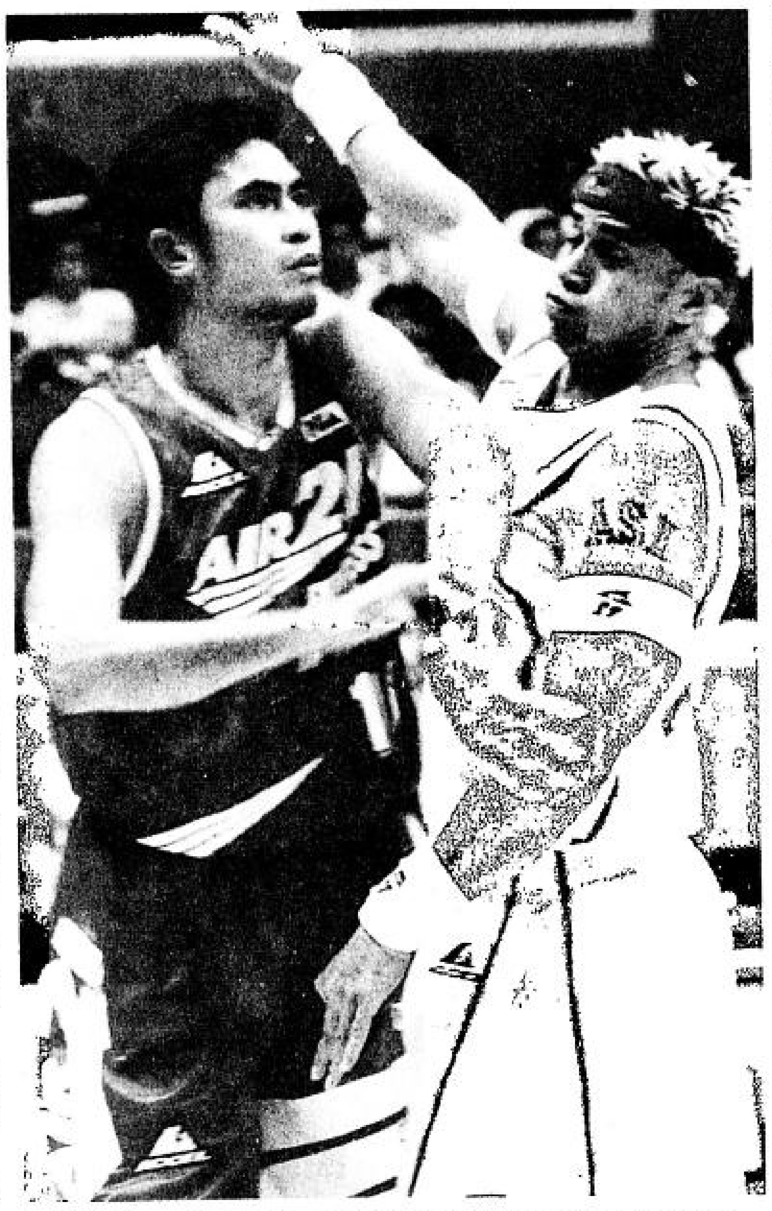
De Ocampo's jumper from the top of the key eased the pressure on the Express after the Phone Pals had come within, 81-83, with two minutes remaining.

Ranidel completed the brothers' act by draining a long tom of his own two possessions later, forcing the Phone Pals to take hurried shots and go into a fouling binge in their race against time.

"We're in top condition," said Air21 coach Bo Perasol, whose team played four matches in five days. "The key in the next game is our ability to ad-

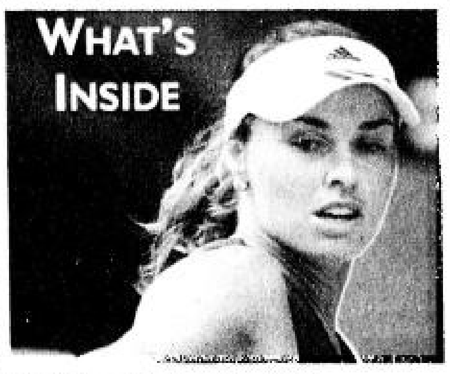
BARAKO/ A27

GAMES WEDNESDAY
(*Cuneta Astrodome*)
4:40 p.m.—Alaska vs Red Bull Barako
7:35 p.m.—Talk 'N Text vs Air21



AIR21'S Yancy De Ocampo (left) flicks a pass to a teammate off Asi taulava of Talk 'N Text during their game yesterday. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

WHAT'S INSIDE



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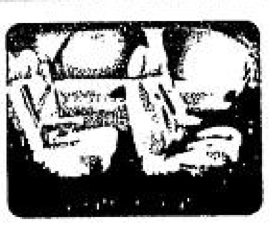

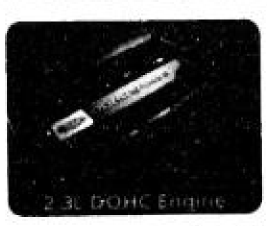

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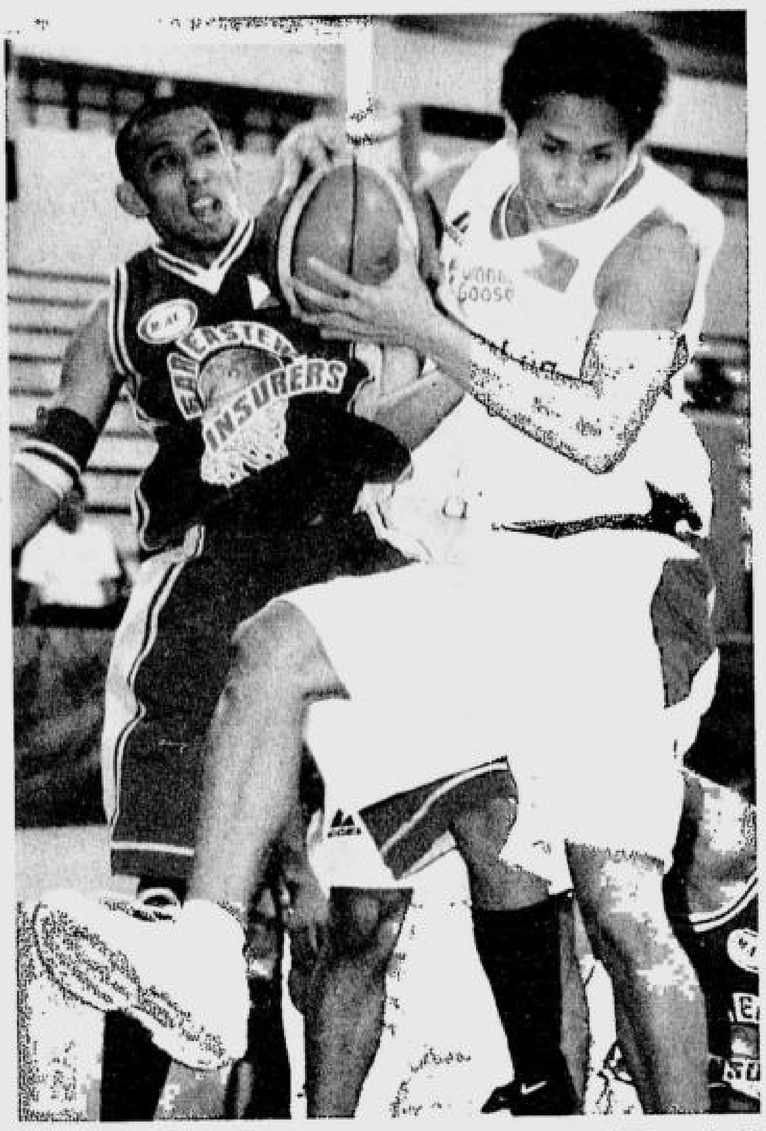


DENNIS Concha of Granny Goose collars the rebound off JR Estrada.of Far Eastern Insurance in their game Saturday. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Harbour Centre pins 4th loss on Magnolia

By Jasmine W. Payo

RAIN OR SHINE TURNED TO ONE OF ITS reserves to claim top spot even as Magnolia absorbed a stunning third straight loss at the end of the elimination round in the PBL Heroes Cup yesterday at the San Andres gym in Manila.

Yousif Aljamal unloaded 11 of his 18 points in the last six minutes of play as the Elasto Painters slipped past the Montaña Jewels, 69-62, to finish with a leading 8-3 win-loss record.

The Wizards, who dominated the tournament before the long holiday break, took a 69-61 defeat at the hands of Harbour Centre and dropped to second at 7-4.

Rain or Shine and Magnolia have already claimed the two outright semifinal slots as early as Saturday.

Harbour Centre ended up tied with Granny Goose and Hapee-PCU at 6-5, but the Goose Masters claimed the third spot and the first twice-to-beat advantage in the quarterfinals due to a superior quotient.

Hapee-PCU and Harbour Centre will battle for the fourth spot and the remaining quarterfinal incentive in a 3:30 p.m. knockout game tomorrow.

STANDINGS	W	L
R. or Shine	8	3
Magnolia	7	4
G. Goose	6	5
Hapee-PCU	6	5
Harbour	6	5
Montaña	5	6
Far E. Ins.	3	8
Toyota Otis	3	8

GAMES TOMORROW
(San Andres Gym)
3:30 p.m.—Harbour Centre vs Hapee-PCU

The Montaña Jewels settled for the last quarterfinal seat with a 5-6 card.

The Jewels surged to a 47-40 advantage with Al Magpayo shooting three consecutive treys late in the third period.

Rain on Shine forged the 13th deadlock of the game at 53, before Aljamal took over to put the Elasto Painters ahead the rest of the way.

Gilbert Malabanan also contributed 13 markers for the Painters.

Harbour Centre again turned to former Ateneo star LA Tenorio and Joseph Yeo, who teamed up for 27 points. Fil-Am Rob Reyes also shone with 11 points, 13 rebounds and three blocks.

"Our four-game streak is a good roll going into the quarterfinals," said Harbour Centre coach Jorge Gallent.

Magnolia's Fil-Am standout Kelly Williams sat out the game due to a sprained ankle, while mainstay Arwind Santos went 0-for-6 from the field.

The Portmasters got off to a bristling start behind Tenorio and Reyes for an early double-digit spread, 22-12, in the first period and were never headed after that.

The scores:

First Game

HARBOUR CENTRE 69—Tenorio 14, Yeo 13, Reyes 11, Paterno 9, Saguindel 9, Coching 6, Gaco 3, Arellano 2, Alonzo 2, Menor 0, Dy 0.

MAGNOLIA 61—Rizada 13, Jones 12, Isip 9, Misolas 8, Valenzuela 7, Chan 5, Angeles 4, Bombeo 2, Barcellano 1, Santos 0.

Quarters: 22-12, 42-31, 55-51, 69-61

Second Game

RAIN OR SHINE 69—Aljamal 13, Malabanan 13, Cabatu 11, Enrile 9, Sagad 8, Ortiguerra 5, Reyes 3, Javier 3, Orbeta 2, Tangkay 2, Tan 0, Sta. Maria 0, Robles 0, Alastre 0.

MONTAÑA 62—Magpayo 16, Juntilla 11, Compton 10, Dela Cuesta 8, Bagulon 5, Vergara 3, Bono 3, Atablanco 2, Mercado 2, Capus 2, Castro 0.

Quarters: 12-11, 25-28, 42-47, 69-62

Glorious moment at PSA awards night for all of Team Philippines

56th PSA AWARDS NIGHT
HER EXCELLENCY
PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO

SHIELA Mae Perez (fifth from left) raises the Athlete of the Year trophy during the PSA Awards Saturday night, which was graced by no less than President Macapagal Arroyo (fourth from left). With them are (from left) POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, PSC chair Willaim "Butch" Ramirez, PSA president Jimmy Cantor of Malaya, archer Amaya Paz, boxer Harry Tañamor and wushu artist Rene Catalan. Perez, the Zamboanga-bred diver who won three gold medals during the Southeast Asian Games, was picked to represent Team Philippines, which the PSA named Athlete of the Year after winning the SEA Games overall crown for the first time. RUDY ESPERAS

By Francis Ochoa

SHE SAT AT THE EDGE OF THE ballroom crowd almost unnoticed. Dressed in a black cocktail dress, and fiddling with her cellular phone, she was a perfect symbol for those who were nearly forgotten Saturday night.

Not that she minded being out of the spotlight.

"It's okay," said 21-year-old Esmeralda Tayag in Filipino. "This night is for the whole team anyway.

"That means it is our night, too."

Tayag was part of the collective group that the Philippine Sportswriters Association named as Athlete of the Year.

That group had many names. But for most of the time since the announcement was made to honor the entire 23rd Southeast Asian Games delegation that brought home the overall title, that group had but one face.

And going into Saturday's coronation night, that face belonged to triple-gold medalist Shiela Mae Perez.

"I feel proud to accept the award in behalf of the entire Team Philippines," Perez said in Filipino. "I felt like crying [on the stage] and I almost could not talk when I was asked to make an acceptance speech."

Perez herself felt the strain of being Team Philippines' poster girl: "My face feels tired from all the smiling."

There were those who helped in shouldering some of the attention given out Saturday night.

Statuesque karateka Gretchen Malalad cornered her share of the photographers' lenses. New archery sensation Amaya Paz, wushu top bet Rene Catalan and boxer Harry Tañamor were Perez's escorts when the charming diver took the stage with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

But there were also those who sat in the outer fringes of the limelight. Others like Tayag who had to be queried by people wondering who in the world she was before they found out that the Santo Tomas student was the left fielder of the gold-winning women's softball team.

There were those who needed to remind people that they put in the same amount of effort to make sure the country's hosting of the Games would mark the first time it would end up with the overall title of the biennial meet.

Already left out by television time constraints, they were also edited out of a 35-minute speech by Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

The speech—part self-serving, part apology, part finger-pointing and part lullabye—praised heavily instead the working committees under Cojuangco.

Again, not that Tayag or any athlete complained.

"I did not hear it," said the Pampanga-born lass sheepishly.

There were those, however, who noticed.

"It was such a self-serving speech," said the ever-feisty former POC president Cristy Ramos.

"The way the SEA Games were organized, the only reason why the POC officials right now don't have to resign out of delicadeza is because the athletes saved them by winning the overall title," Ramos said. "The least he could have done was dedicate his speech wholly to the athletes."

Luckily, the significance of the night was not lost on those who worked hard to build everything up right to that moment Saturday evening.

"I'm still happy," Tayag said. "All of us who are part of Team Philippines are proud of this moment. This is a once-in-a-lifetime achievement, to be named Athlete of the Year."

When Perez finally raised the Athlete of the Year trophy, from her own obscure corner of the ballroom, the SEA Games first-timer flashed a satisfied smile that belied the affinity she felt with the teammate who shook hands with the Chief Executive, hogged all the attention and was the target of all that bursts of flashbulbs.

Like Tayag said, this was, after all, her night, too.

Pacquiao now 10-8 underdog

By Recah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA—IT'S now Erik Morales who's the odds-on favorite in the the sportsbook windows in Las Vegas, site of his rematch with Filipino boxing icon Manny Pacquiao on Jan. 21.

Pacquiao, 7-5 favorite since the announcement of the second encounter last year, was pegged a 10-8 underdog versus the Mexican hero Morales yesterday.

This means a bet of $125 on Morales would pay $100, said Pacquiao publicist Winchell Campos.

Expect more shifts in the betting trend, advised sportsman Rex "Wakee" Salud, a Pacquiao confidante.

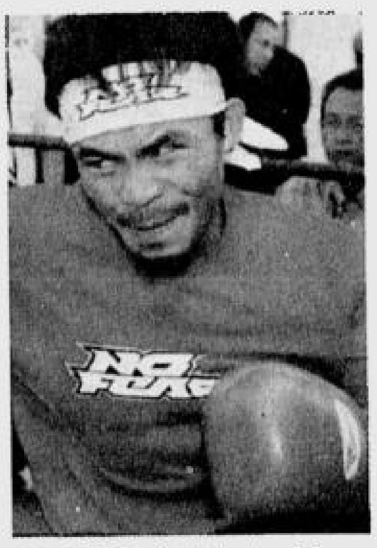
If it were in cockfighting, an P80 bet would pay P100 for Pacquiao, or *lo-diyes*, Salud said.

Nothing much has been heard from Morales who is winding up a rigid training in the Mexican outskirts.

Pacquiao, meanwhile, continued to train behind closed doors.

All the three Manila scribes here to cover the big rematch, together with Games and Amusements Board (GAB) boxing division head Noli Flores, were disallowed entry to the Wild Card gym of trainer Freddie Roach during Pacquiao's workout yesterday.

The taller Morales rode on guts and superior craft in conquering Pacquiao by unanimous decision in a bloody, dramatic first encounter at the MGM Grand, also in Las Vegas, in March last year.



PACQUIAO: Behind closed doors

Majority of experts believe Pacquiao could win only via a knockout, but Roach disagreed and insisted the superbly honed Filipino idol would also go for a win on points.

Roach also confirmed the INQUIRER report that he had ordered changes in Pacquiao's arsenal, thereby correcting serious flaws that cost them the first fight.

"We would be foolish to go only for the knockout knowing Morales has never been stopped before," Roach told the INQUIRER yesterday.

That said, Roach remarked he sees nothing less than a spectacular win for Pacquiao at the Thomas and Mack Center in Las Vegas.

Manny says he's OK after injury scare

By Recah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA—MANNY Pacquiao said he had felt pain in his left arm after a heavy workout here but he did not let it hamper his training.

"*Masakit*, muscle pain, *pero* OK *na lahat* (It hurts, but everything's okay now)," he told the INQUIRER after completing his afternoon gym regimen yesterday.

Pacquiao assured everything was fine in his preparation for the second encounter against Erik Morales on Jan. 21.

There were reports Pacquiao had strained his left forearm after it accidentally hit the head of a sparmate.

But Dr. Nasser Cruz, who confirmed the strain, said Pacquiao has recovered phenomenally.

"If it had happened to an older fellow, it would have taken longer to heal," Cruz said. "But Manny is strong, young and takes a lot of supplements."

Pacquiao winds up sparring here Monday morning before motoring to Las vegas in a convoy in the afternoon.

Handlers said he was expected to complete 130 rounds of sparring in preparation for his no-tomorrow battle with Morales.

BEAUTIES AND THE BEST: The Philippines' Biboy Enriquez (left) and California's Joe Stanfield show their fighting cocks, two of the most-talked-about bloodlines, during the World Slashers Cup press presentation at the Gateway Mall in Quezon City last Saturday. With them are Bb. Pilipinas Universe Gionna Cabrera, Miss International Precious Lara Quigaman, and Bb. Pilipinas World Carlene Aguilar (partly hidden). RUDY ESPERAS

Crack foreign, local entries plunge into action in NCA world tilt today

THE NCA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 8-Cock Derby kicks off today at the San Juan Coliseum with at least 75 fights on the schedule.

Four-time world champion Jun Santiago leads an international field vying in the NCA's first big hack-fights of the year.

The much-awaited derby, which offers more than P4 million in cash prizes, will have its semifinals on Wednesday and finals on Friday.

Among the participants are US breeders Jimbo Cox, Damon Yorkman, Joe Wolcott, Larry Whitehead, popular cockfighter Patrick Antonio, Gov. Ito Ynares, Boy Royo, Boy de Roca, Rudy Jingco, Benjie Lim, Gov. JV Magsaysay, Rene de Guzman, Ruel Ricafort, Jet Fernando, Manny Santos and Pol Estrellado.

Ryan Lim

Braves stun Tribu, snare cage crown

PAGADIAN CITY—THE NORTH Cotabato Braves shocked fancied Tribu Sugbu, 83-76, Saturday to bag the Mayor Sammy Co Invitational basketball crown at the jampacked city gym here.

Michael Etrata and Rey Binas combined for 38 points for the Braves, the team owned by Gov. Manny Piñol's who were competing only for the second time in the Nature's Spring-NBC pre-season series supported by Sulpicio Lines, Spring Cooking Oil, Molten and Prime Channel.

The Tribesmen of Cebu businessmen Lito Gillamac and Mario King were heavily favored to wrap up their third straight title after crushing the Braves, 105-63, and 98-79, in the classification and semifinal rounds.

The Braves came alive in the payoff period after trailing for 30 minutes, exploding for 26 points while limiting the Tribesmen to 10.

Earlier, host Pagadian Explorers also surprised multi-titled Spring Cooking Oil in overtime, 97-90 to clinch the third spot.

The scores:

NORTH COTABATO 83—Etrata 21, Binas 17, Clar 12, Coronado 10, Ligue 8, Mejorada 4, Reyes 3, Tanigue 2, Del Norte 2, Dagatan 2, Jawod 2, Martinez 0, Sansaet 0, Cabanog 0.

TRIBU 76—Almacin 13, Calo 11, Sevilla 10, Cainglet 10, Bucao 7, Yabut 7, Ursal 6, Nicdao 4, Mercado 3, Butel 3, Ducay 2.

Quarters: 17-24, 39-41, 57-66, 83-76

Barako take 2-0 cushion; Express win

From page A25

just to what Talk 'N Text would throw at us."

Shawn Daniels, whose poor free-throw shooting told heavily on their defeat in Game 1, showed up with his 18th double-double of 14 points and 24 boards.

Damien Cantrell matched Daniels' 18th double-double by finishing with 16 points and 17 rebounds.

Meanwhile, Red Bull Barako coach Yeng Guiao sent Jimwell Torion home after the first half. Guiao reportedly resented Torion's reaction after he criticized the playmaker for his miscues in the final two minutes of the first quarter.

Torion, who came with his two children, left the game with two turnovers and a personal foul in two minutes of action.

The scores:

First Game

AIR21 90—De Ocampo 17, Ritualo 17, Daniels 14, De Ocampo 12, David 10, Tubid 5, Fran 5, Canaleta 4, Arboleda 4, Se 2, Gonzales 0, Ferriols 0.

TALK 'N TEXT 87—Cantrell 16, Miller 15, Alapag 14, Taulava 11, Telan 8, Belano 6, Avenido 5, Gelig 4, Carey 4, Pablo 4.

Quarters: 25-19, 49-36, 70-64, 90-87

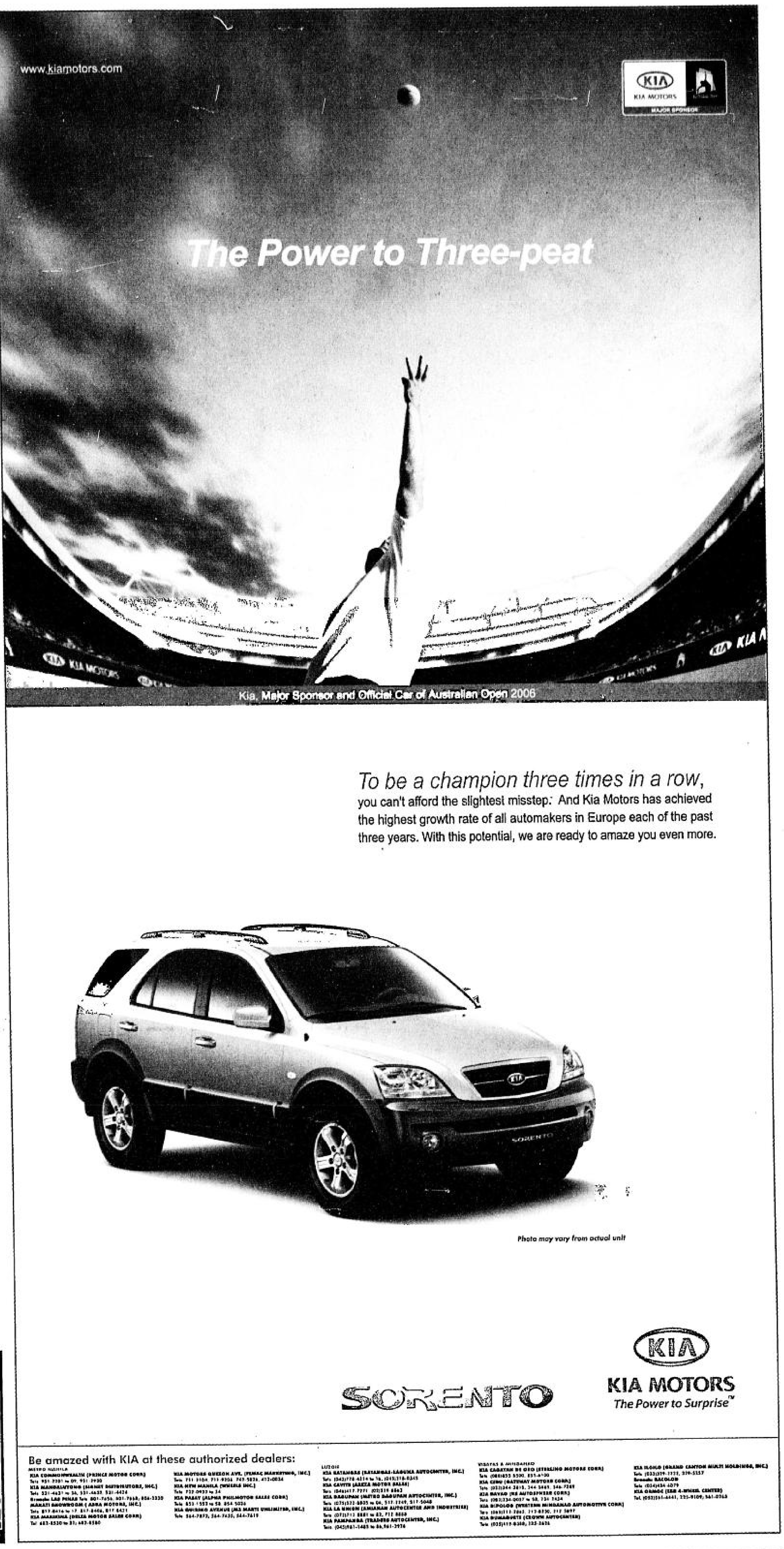
Second Game

RED BULL 80—Penny 20, Villanueva 16, Baguio 14, Tugade 13, Fonacier 10, Cruz 6, Pennisi 1, Najorda 0, Bugia 0, Robinson 0, Valenzuela 0, Torion 0.

ALASKA 73—Bradley 14, Dela Cruz 14, Cariaso 12, Cortez 11, Alvarez 6, Allado 6, Thoss 5, Cablay 3, Hugnatan 2.

Quarters: 10-18, 35-39, 57-56, 80-73.

NAT'L TRIATHLON HOST
The Lakeshore in Mexico, Pampanga, will host the National Triathlon Championship on Feb. 5 with close to 300 competitive and recreational triathletes expected to join. The sponsorship agreement was signed recently between Trap president Tom Carrasco Jr. and architect Eli Paras, VP-Operations of Lakeshore. With them are Lakeshore officers Abby Pojas and Jojo de Leon, Trap secretary general Mon Marchan and race director Melvin Fausto.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Pistons still humming smoothly

MEMPHIS' Pau Gasol (center) takes it strong to the hoop against San Antonio's Tim Duncan (left) and Robert Horry. AP

AUBURN HILLS, MICHIGAN—RICHARD HAMILTON SCORED 19 points to lead seven Detroit players in double figures as the Pistons dominated the shorthanded Charlotte Bobcats, 114-91, in National Basketball Association play on Saturday.

Maurice Evans had 18 points and Tayshaun Prince and Antonio McDyess both added 16 points for the Pistons, who took advantage of an injury-riddled Charlotte team to win for the fifth time in six games.

Detroit (29-5) had little difficulty with the Bobcats, who dressed just 10 players due to injuries.

The Pistons' victory came on the back of a big road win over defending champion the San Antonio Spurs on Tuesday, Detroit's first visit there since losing the seventh game of the NBA Finals last season.

Charlotte did not present nearly the challenge that the Spurs did, but the Pistons did not let up, taking a 60-43 lead at the half before cruising to the easy win.

Detroit dressed 12 players and used them all, as coach Flip Saunders emptied his bench and got everybody into the game for at least one minute in the blow-out.

"That was a workmanlike performance coming off a big win," Saunders told reporters after the game. "That's what you like to see."

Chauncey Billups added 13 points for the Pistons while Rasheed Wallace had 12 points and Ben Wallace contributed 10 points and 13 rebounds.

Ben Wallace left the game late in the first quarter after apparently twisting his knee, but returned in the second quarter for the Pistons.

Charlotte (11-26) lost its third straight game and seventh in the past eight during a stretch where the club has had numerous injuries.

In Atlanta, Gilbert Arenas scored 33 points as the Washington Wizards beat the Hawks, 114-106, in overtime.

Joe Johnson scored 23 points and had 11 assists for the Hawks.

In Dallas, Josh Howard scored 29 points as the Mavericks crushed the New Jersey Nets, 110-77.

Jason Kidd scored 19 points for the Nets.

In Houston, PJ Brown scored 13 points and had 10 rebounds as the New Orleans Hornets beat the Rockets 86-80.

HAMILTON AP

Juwan Howard scored 22 points and had 10 rebounds for the Rockets.

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan scored 19 points and had 13 rebounds as the Spurs slid by the Memphis Grizzlies, 80-79.

Duncan made a layup off an inbound alley-oop pass from Manu Ginobili with 7.2 seconds left for the game-winner.

Ginobili scored 20 points for the Spurs, who led by 15 points midway through the third quarter before Memphis charged back behind Bobby Jackson and Mike Miller.

Pau Gasol scored 26 points for the Grizzlies.

In Los Angeles, Chris Kaman had 25 points and 10 rebounds, leading the Clippers over the Seattle SuperSonics, 98-72.

In Oakland, Kobe Bryant scored 38 points as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Golden State Warriors, 110-104, despite a triple-double (24 points, 13 assists, 11 rebounds) from Baron Davis.

In Milwaukee, Carmelo Anthony scored 38 points as the Denver Nuggets beat the Bucks, 100-93.

In Chicago, Stephen Jackson scored 21 of his 29 points in the second half and Anthony Johnson's basket with 3.9 seconds remaining sent short-handed Indiana past the Chicago Bulls, 91-89 in Chicago.

In Phoenix, Shawn Marion scored 25 points and had 12 rebounds as the Phoenix Suns beat the Cavaliers, 115-106.

The Suns overcame a 46-point performance by Cleveland's LeBron James for its ninth victory in 11 games.

In Salt Lake City, Dwyane Wade scored 31 points as the Miami Heat beat the Utah Jazz, 100-94. *Reuters*

It's official: James will play for US 5

PHOENIX—NBA STAR LEBRON JAMES COMmitted to playing for the United States at this year's world championships and the 2008 Olympics.

"It's officially official in his case and I know he's excited about it," said Jerry Colangelo, managing director of USA Basketball. "He's obviously one of the core guys you want because of his talent, his age, his maturity at a very young age."

Colangelo met with James before the Cleveland Cavaliers played the Phoenix Suns on Saturday, but thought the 21-year-old Cavs' star already had committed in a meeting in Chicago on Dec. 22. However, James was quoted as saying he still had to talk to Colangelo before making any commitment.

He was part of the US team that struggled to win a bronze medal at the Athens Olympics in 2004, but saw limited playing time for coach Larry Brown's team. He played in eight games, averaging 5.4 points and 11.4 minutes per contest.

Meanwhile, The United States will face Puerto Rico in its first game of the basketball world championships after Sunday's draw.

The United States, the tournament's top-seeded team, was drawn in Group D along with Puerto Rico, Slovenia, Italy, China and Senegal. Its opening game on Aug. 19 in Sapporo will be a rematch of its 92-73 loss to Puerto Rico at the Athens Olympics.

Defending champion Serbia-Montenegro, formerly Yugoslavia, has a record five world titles and is in Group A with Athens Olympic gold medalists Argentina, Venezuela, France, Lebanon and Nigeria.

The 2006 FIBA Men's World Championship will be held Aug. 19-Sept. 3 in Japan. *AP*

Toms collars share of Sony Open lead

HONOLULU—DAVID TOMS SET A COURSE record with a 9-under 61 and it still wasn't enough to take the lead in the Sony Open, which turned into a two-man race between Toms and the equally hot Chad Campbell on Saturday.

Toms caught Campbell with a two-putt birdie on the 18th, setting the tournament record at Waialae Country Club since it changed to a par 70 in 1999. Davis Love III still has the course record of 12-under 60 in 1994.

"I was just trying to keep up," Toms said. "I made a couple of putts I wasn't supposed to make, but that's what you do when you have a hot round."

Campbell did his heavy lifting with the irons, rarely leaving himself birdie putts outside 15 feet and converting enough of them for a 62. He had a 15-foot birdie putt to match Toms' record score on the final hole, but it hung on the lip.

They were at 14-under 196, seven shots clear of anyone else.

Big-hitting Bubba Watson, who hit a wedge into the par-5 18th for a birdie and a 66, and Shane Bertsch (63) were tied for third at 7-under 203. Jim Furyk, tied with Campbell starting the third round, had a 70 that left him in the group at 204 with Rory Sabbatini and Charles Warren.

Waialae was missing some energy with 16-year-old Michelle Wie home writing a school paper instead of testing herself on the US PGA Tour. Not even one-fourth of the gallery that watched her for two days were with the final threesome, although the golf was superb.

A gentle breeze allowed for better scoring, but no one took advantage like Toms and Campbell.

Defending champion Vijay Singh went out in 30 to pull within one shot of the lead, but he managed only two birdies and two bogeys on the back nine for a 65, and wound up losing ground. *AP*

Bronco Champ helps end Patriots reign

DENVER—CHAMP BAILEY INTERcepted a Tom Brady pass in the endzone and returned it 100 yards to break open a tight defensive battle in helping the Denver Broncos register a 27-13 victory over the New England Patriots on Saturday.

The two-time defending Super Bowl champion Patriots had little answer to Denver's marauding defense and were punished for a series of fumbles and interceptions that allowed the home team to ease to victory in the AFC divisional showdown.

Winning their first playoff game since 1998 when John Elway led the Broncos to a Super Bowl victory, Denver took advantage of five New England turnovers, snapping the Patriots' NFL-record 10 straight post-season wins.

On finally winning a postseason game without Elway, Denver head coach Mike Shanahan said: 'John Elway was a great player and I think he will be the first to tell you that it takes a complete team. "

Bailey's interception came as the Patriots were trailing 10-6 but driving deep in Denver territory late in the third quarter. *Reuters*

Fashion, sporting worlds fuse at Australian Open

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—The white ball has virtually vanished from tennis, but it made a comeback Sunday as the sports and fashion worlds met instead of clashing.

Rising Russian star Maria Kirilenko made her debut as tennis' face for designer Stella McCartney in a new line of clothes and shoes specially designed for the No. 25 seed. Fashion tie-ups are on the rise in tennis, with Serena Williams already well-known for dabbling in her own designs.

The scene was a special tennis court set up at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. The surface was plush carpet in "dusty rose"—the same color as Kirilenko's dress, which looked like a loose tank above a layered, pleated skirt. Underneath were a fluorescent orange tank top and shorts. The materials are designed to help keep athletes cool.

Bright green tennis balls would have clearly clashed, so the event organizers found some white balls that complemented the color scheme.

"I can bring together two things that are very important to me, my sport and my style," Kirilenko said. "It's the best technology. In addition, it looks great."

McCartney couldn't make it to the tournament because of a prior commitment, but sent Kirilenko a telegram of support.

"Now, get out there and kick ass!" McCartney wrote. *AP*

MARIA Kirilenko takes to the practice court wearing the latest from fashion designer Stella McCartney. AP

Hingis feels the butterflies fluttering

HINGIS: No longer a fearless rookie AP

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—FORMER world No. 1 Martina Hingis picked a tough time to make her comeback to Grand Slam tennis.

For only the second time in 30 years, all of the women's top 10 are featured in the main draw at the Australian Open.

The list goes on. There's 20 of the top 20 here and 46 of the top 50; there's eight women who've held the No. 1-ranking and five former Australian Open winners in the field.

Hingis, who spent 209 weeks at No. 1 in five stints, retired in 2002 because of long-term foot and heel problems.

Despite winning three and losing three Australian Open finals over a six-year span from 1997, the 25-year-old Swiss star is a rank outsider at Melbourne Park because of the power evolution in women's tennis.

She doesn't even have a ranking.

"It feels different definitely from coming here playing in '95 when I was 15, (as a) fearless rookie," she said Sunday. "Ten years later, definitely you have some butterflies in your stomach."

Hingis returned to WTA tournament play at the Gold Coast earlier this month, winning three matches before a semifinals defeat to Italian Flavia Pennetta.

At Sydney last week, she lost to No. 8-ranked Justin Henin-Hardenne, the reigning French Open and 2004 Australian Open champion.

"I don't think it was too bad to lose to the eventual champion," Hingis said. "Playing (Henin-Hardenne) definitely showed me what it's all about now, being a Top 10 player and winning Slams."

Big serves and ground strokes have become the norm in women's tennis since Venus and Serena Williams led the vanguard of heavy hitters.

Hingis relied on touch, anticipation and guile. Henin-Hardenne, who is about the same size as Hingis, has developed a game that helps her combat the heavy hitters.

"She hits it very fast and deep," said Hingis. "That's the difference in today's game. (Players) are more relentless. From the beginning to the end, you have to be 100 percent focused."

Though Hingis still hopes to use some of her old tricks.

"I never could overpower other players, but I hope I can find other winning strategies," she said. *AP*

AMONG the new batch of faces Hingis will have to contend with is Russian superstar Maria Sharapova. REUTERS

Hidayat sees RP Open raising Filipinos' play

INDONESIA'S REIGNING OLYMPIC AND WORLD CHAMPION Taufik Hidayat is keen on seeing action in the first Philippine Open Badminton Championships, saying the event will further raise the level of play here to world-class caliber.

"From what I've seen, the physique of Filipinos is identical to most of the world champions whom I have played with," said Hidayat. "The only element needed for major success by Filipino players is more international competitions."

The Indon ace, the first player to win both the Olympic and world singles crown, leads the foreign challenge in the upcoming Philippine Open slated March 1-5 at the PhilSports Arena in Pasig City.

Britain's Nathan Robertson and Gail Emms, men's world No. 1 Lin Dan, Pi Hongyan of France and Mia Audina Tjiptawan of the Netherlands— who all saw action in the MVP Cup here last year here—are also expected to vie for honors.

Hidayat was actually scheduled to grace the launch of the $120,000 event last week, being its chief endorser, but he begged off after sustaining an injury.

The International Badminton Federation has categorized the RP Open, sponsored by Bingo Bonanza, as a four-star tournament—which gives local players the chance to shoot for world-ranking points.

Organized by IMG and backed by JVC, the event is expected to lure over 200 players from 25 countries since it will also serve as a tune-up for those competing in the China Masters, a six-star tournament slated the week after the RP Open.

Other backers are INQUIRER Badminton, The Philippine Star, Badminton Asia, Solar Sports, Jam 88.3, 99.5 RT, Magic 89.9, 103.5 K-Lite, Wave 89.1, Snickers, Toby's Sports, Fossil Watches, Bacchus, Yonex Sunrise and Crowne Plaza, the official hotel.

PRAISES FOR OPEN: Taufik Hidayat AFP

LU-Vigan Bike for Hope set

THE BIKE FOR HOPE CYCLING TOUR FROM LA Union to Vigan kicks off on Jan. 21, organizers announced yesterday. This will be a 110-km trek starting from La Union, the picturesque gateway to the Ilocos region, to Vigan, the best-preserved example of a planned Spanish colonial town in Asia. A project of Sen. Pia Cayetano, the 4th Bike for Hope coincides with Vigan's town fiesta. Photo opportunities await camera bugs along the tour and at Vigan. For cyclists, there will be an entry fee of P300. Transportation will be provided. The first 300 registrants will be entitled to a jersey. The water stations are in Tagudin (93 km to Vigan), Candon (62 km) and Narvacan (30 km). The tour will finish at the Vigan capitol building.

Xavier forges 3-way tie for Hitachi lead

GAMES WEDNESDAY (UNO gym)
5:30 p.m.—Xavier vs.St. Stephen
7 p.m.—GCHS vs. Hope Christian

LAST YEAR'S RUNNER-UP XAVIER School hardly worked up a sweat in crushing Hope Christian High School, 95-49, for its second straight win in the Metro Manila Tiong Lian Basketball Association (MMTLBA)-Hitachi Cup basketball tournament at the UNO gym in Sta. Cruz, Manila.

Philip Ong finished with 15 points to lead a balanced scoring attack by Xavier, which forged a three-way tie for first place with idle UNO High and St. Jude Catholic School.

Three other players—Wesley Contreras, John Woodward Co and Charles Tiu—also scored in double figures for Xavier, which is being handled by coach Patrick Aquino and manager Caesar Wongchuking.

Conteras contribubted 12, Co added 11 and Tiu had 10 for Xavier, which lost to St. Stephen in the best-of-three title showdown last year.

St. Jude defeated Grace Christian High School, 66-49, to join UNO and Xavier in the lead in this seven-team tournament also supported by Accel, Davies Paints, Burlington, Converse and Helathy Options.

Edison Chua, Carl Cua and Rankin Cailles combined for 46 points for St. Jude, which beat Hope, 69-49, in its first game.

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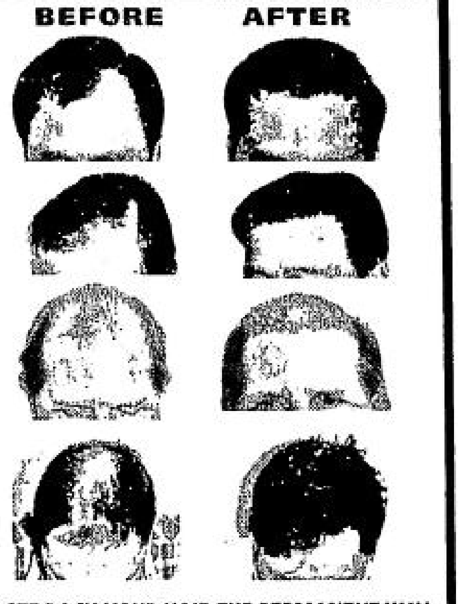

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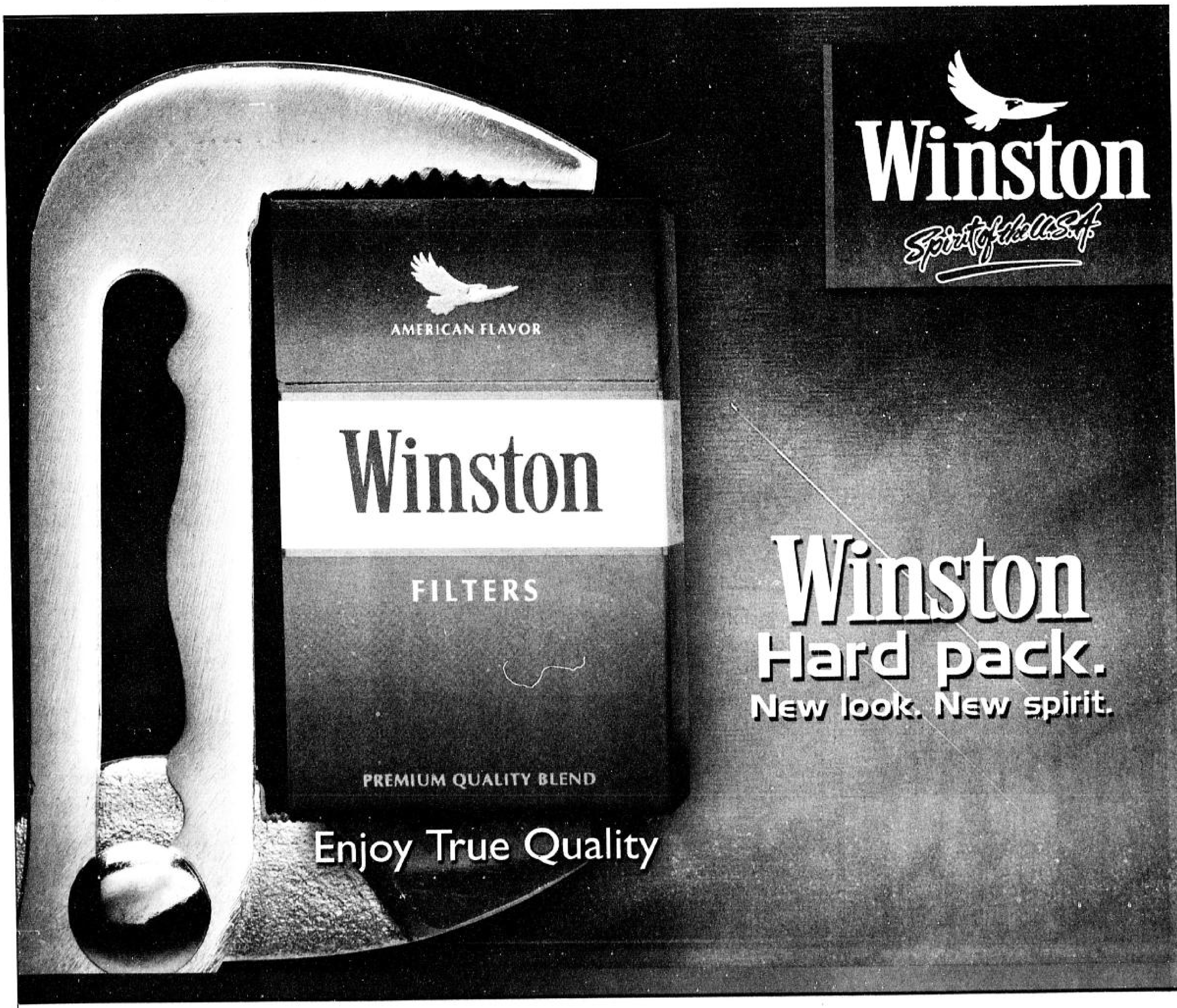

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Aussie Open on Star Sports

STAR SPORTS WILL BRING LIVE AND EXCLUSIVE daily coverage of the year's first tennis Grand Slam event—the 2006 Australian Open—beginning today until Jan. 29. Telecast starts today at 8 a.m. World No. 1 Roger Federer is the heavy favorite to rule at Melbourne Park following the withrawals of defending champion Marat Safin, four-time winner Andre Agassi and 2005 French Open winner Rafael Nadal due to injuries. American Andy Roddick and hometown bet Lleyton Hewitt are expected to be Federer's toughest challengers for this year's title. In the women's side, reigning champion Serena Williams will face stiff competition from world No.1 Lindsay Davenport, 2004 winner Justin Henin-Hardenne, Kim Clijsters and Russian Maria Sharapova. Another interesting highlight is the comeback of three-time champion Martina Hingis.

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Training in earnest for the Doha Asiad

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

DESPITE THEIR RESOUNDING VICTORY in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games last month, the resurrected Filipino athletes will not rest on their laurel but will train in earnest for this year's Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, from Dec. 1 to 15.

In an interview with the INQUIRER's Musong Castillo, Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco said, "The POC is not putting premium on the gold medal winners of the SEA Games last month, but it will be asking all NSAs (national sports association) to evaluate the performance of their athletes for the coming Asiad and submit their respective recommendations before the POC General Assembly meeting, the first for this year, on Jan. 25."

Added Cojuangco: "The Asian Games is a bigger tournament, so we need to send only the best." I agree.

The Asian Games are no longer a venue where the athletes will be taking part to gain the needed international exposure; it is a sporting meet for honest-to-goodness competitions where POC and PSC (Philippine Sports Commission) officials are duty-bound to field only the best and brightest in order not to embarrass the country before the eyes of the world. Filipino taxpayers are more conscious now about the medals our athletes would be winning since public funds (their money in particular) would be spent for these games. The people want results, not promises, from sports officials whose upkeep they are paying for.

In the last Asian Games held in Busan, Korea, in 2002, the Philippines won three gold medals—the men's 9-ball doubles in billiards by Francisco "Django" Bustamante and Antonio Lining, the men's doubles in bowling by World Cup Hall of Famer Paeng Nepomuceno and RJ Bautista and the equestrian show jumping by Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski, who was later voted PSA Athlete of the Year 2002.

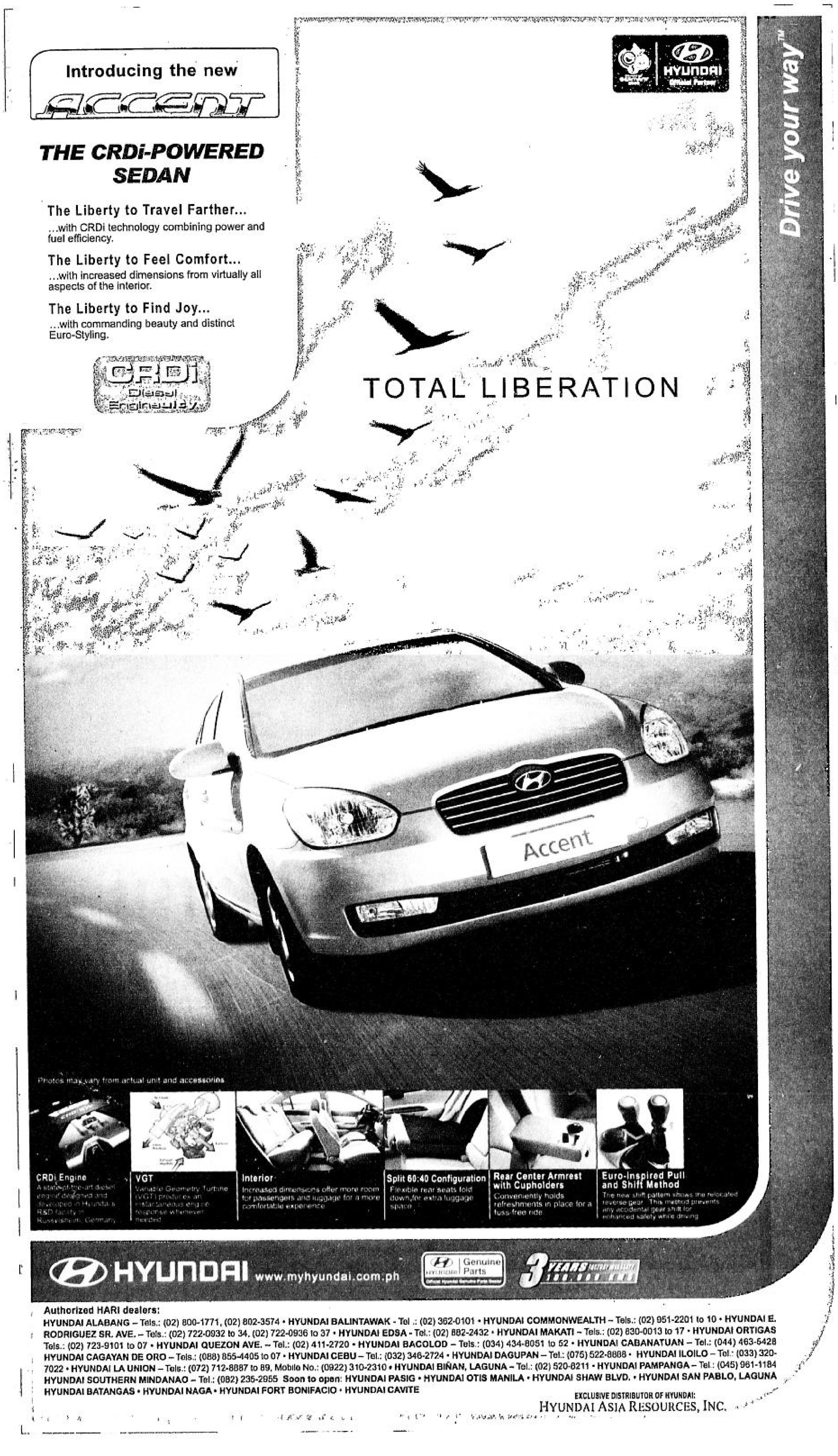
Four years earlier, in the 1998 Asiad in Bangkok, the Philippines landed a disgraceful 21st in the overall standings by winning only one gold, courtesy of the 15-ball billiards doubles team of Gande Valle and Romeo Villanueva. In that Bangkok bash, many of the Philippines' Southeast Asian neighbors overtook the Filipinos' cream of the crop, to wit: Thailand, relying on its hometown advantage, bagged 24 gold medals; Indonesia, a perennial SEA Games overall champion, won six golds, Malaysia five, and, would you believe, unheralded Sri Lanka three and Singapore and Myanmar two golds each. The Philippines wound up with 1 gold, 5 silver and 12 bronze medals, narrowly beating Vietnam by one bronze.

Over the years, the Philippines made little progress in the Asiad and, more importantly, the Olympic Games. "We have been humiliated too long," said a longtime sports fan who, like many others, is more sensitive now to the country's floundering performance. "It's time we wake up."

Retracing history, the Philippines attained monumental achievements in the old version of the Asiad, the Far Eastern Games, from 1913 until 1934.

But after the Pacific War, the country's athletic program dipped dramatically. By the 1950s, the Filipino athletes had fallen on hard times. The Philippines made its biggest impact in the Asiad in 1954 when Manila hosted the meet's second edition, winning 14 gold medals, the most by any RP team in four decades. However, the country's performance dipped in succeeding Asiads starting in 1958 in Tokyo where RP won nine gold medals and in 1962 in Jakarta where we won seven.

How will the Philippines fare in the Doha Games? Will it win five, six, seven or more gold medals? Just where it is headed, only time will tell.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PCU junior five closes in on wild card berth

PHILIPPINE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY DISPOSED off two NCAA Final Four rivals in as many days at the Rizal Coliseum and appeared set to secure the lone high school wild card at stake in the National Students basketball championship.

PCU whipped San Beda College, 62-39, last Saturday then came back the next day to turn back a taller Jose Rizal University, 73-63.

As the only undefeated squad in the double round eliminations, PCU now has the luxury of the twice-to-beat privilege in the finals set Saturday at the Ninoy Aquino stadium starting at 8 a.m.

In other matches, SBC recovered with an easy 73-61 decision over Far Eastern University, which earlier prevailed over Don Bosco of Mandaluyong, 54-37. PCU-Dasma scored twice against lightweights, 86-43, over Namei and 62-54 over University of Santo Tomas.

The wild-card winner advances to the 12-team tournament proper starting on Feb. 17 that also features as many squads in the collegiate division starring the champions of the NCAA, UAAP, Cusaa and regional eliminations. The women's side will showcase teams from the WNCAA and the WBL.

In its show of support to the organizing Philippine Basketball Federation, the NCAA management committee, through acting chair Bernie Atienza, had released a resolution waiving the rule on residency that would have credited the NSBC appearance as one playing year to their cagers.

``We fully appreciate this act of the NCAA and we are keeping our fingers crossed that the UAAP will look at this issue from the same perspective," PBF president Moying Martelino said.

The PBF is slated to meet again on Thursday to decide the format and schedule of the wild card play for the collegiate division.

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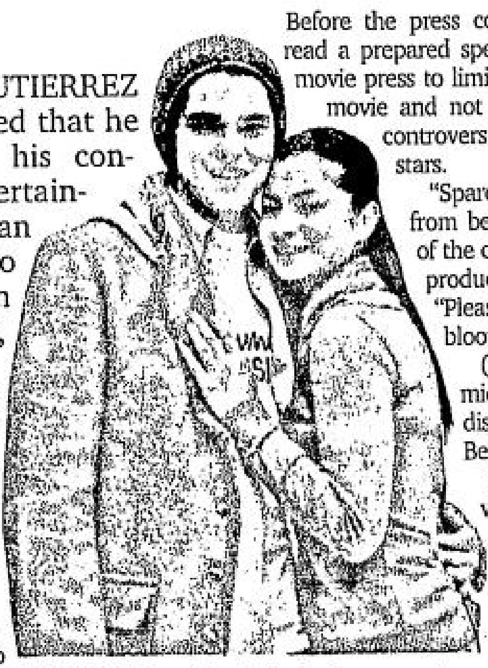
Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

That's not what Annabel said

By Nini Valera



GUTIERREZ and Locsin in their new movie

RICHARD GUTIERREZ has announced that he is renewing his contract with Regal Entertainment, in spite of an earlier statement to the contrary given by his mother, Annabel Rama.

Speaking during the press con for his latest movie with Angel Locsin, the actor, who has an eight-picture deal with Regal, said, "I am focused on my work. I let other people handle the problems."

Gutierrez's starrer, "Mulawin The Movie" failed to win a single award from the recently concluded Metro Manila Film Festival and Rama has accused Regal matriarch Lily Monteverde of manipulating the results. Rama went on nationwide television to say that her son would not even finish his sixth film under the existing contract.

But now, shooting for the movie, "I Will Always Love You"—co-produced by GMA Films, just as "Mulawin The Movie" was—is about to wrap up.

Before the press conference, Monteverde read a prepared speech pleading with the movie press to limit their questions to the movie and not ask about the current controversies involving its lead stars.

"Spare Angel and Richard from becoming further victims of the circumstances (sic)," the producer said. "Please let this love team bloom."

(Locsin herself is in the middle of a money-related dispute with her manager, Becky Aguila.)

In a one-on-one interview with INQUIRER Entertainment after the press con, Gutierrez discussed his feelings about "Mulawin The Movie."

THAT'S/ A2-4

ANYTHING FOR KIDS
ANGELINA Jolie and Brad Pitt sit with Haitian schoolgirl Naomi Georges, 7, at the Immaculate Conception School in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Georges is one of many kids sent to school by Yele Haiti, a charity founded by Haitian-born hip-hop musician Wyclef Jean, who hosted the couple's recent visit. *AP*

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ROUNDUP

I will join if ...

ACCLAIMED director Joel Lamangan wants changes made in the organization of the Metro Manila Film Festival—or he's not participating in the next one.

Speaking at the weekly Kapihan sa Sulo in Quezon City, Lamangan reiterated his earlier call for young industry leaders to take over the MMFF.

"Until now, people like Attorney (Espiridion) Laxa run the show," the director said. "I call them dinosaurs."

Lamangan clarified that he was not upset because another entry, "Kutob," won the Cultural Award or because filmmaker Jose Javier won Best Director.

"I'm protesting because there is no clear standard [for the selection]," Lamangan said. *Norman Bordadora*

Yes, I am

PALTROW

LOS ANGELES—Gwyneth Paltrow has confirmed she's expecting her second child with Coldplay lead singer Chris Martin.

In an interview following a screening of her movie "Proof" late Thursday, the 33-year-old actress was introduced as a pregnant woman, according to the syndicated entertainment television show "The Insider."

Moderator Lou Diamond Phillips asked Paltrow, "How far along are you?"

"Far enough along to feel very cumbersome," she answered. *AP*

It's a tie

LOS ANGELES—The writers of "Syriana" and "Capote" will face a run-off vote after tying for the USC Scripter Award for Best Adaptation of a Book or Short Story to Film.

The two movies beat out finalists "Brokeback Mountain," "The Constant Gardener" and "A History of Violence."

Another round of selection committee balloting will determine a single winner and results will be announced Jan. 18.

"Capote," based on the biography of writer Truman Capote by Gerald Clarke, was written by Dan Futterman. "Syriana," a drama about oil and politics, was based in part on the book "See No Evil" by former CIA agent Robert Baer and was scripted by Academy Award-winning writer Stephen Gaghan, who also directed.

Past winners include "Million Dollar Baby," "Mystic River," "Seabiscuit" and "Wonder Boys."

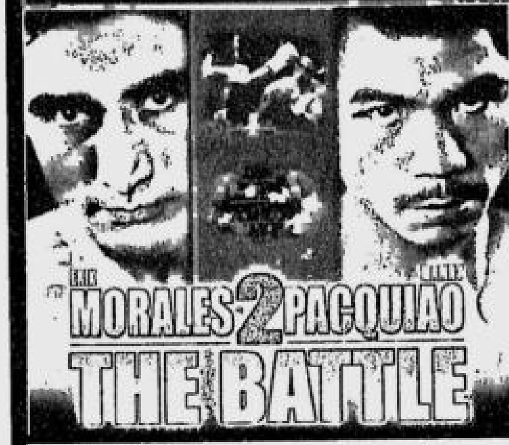
Payback

SYDNEY—Paparazzi armed with water pistols attacked Australian actor Heath Ledger at the Sydney premiere of his new movie "Brokeback Mountain," saying it was payback for his previous bad manners.

The rebel photographers said the unprovoked drenching of Ledger and his co-star and partner Michelle Williams on Friday was a "joke protest" to teach the Hollywood heart-throb to be more polite to them in the future.

Photographer Peter Carette told Saturday's Daily Telegraph the stunt was designed to encourage Ledger "not to abuse" the press.

"He keeps spitting at us and kicking in car doors," Carette told the paper. *AFP*



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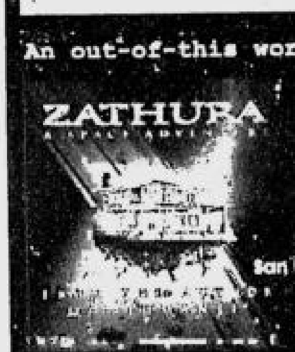

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PICACHE, as a lesbian in "Kaleldo," has been receiving good notices.

No complaints

But Cherrie Pie Picache, Best Supporting Actress, has one wish for the MMFF

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

CHERRIE PIE PICACHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN celebrating her Best Supporting Actress win at the recently concluded Metro Manila Film Festival. Instead she was agitated, unable to hide her disappointment when she sat down with INQUIRER Entertainment.

She said she was saddened by the controversies surrounding the MMFF—particularly, the snide remarks on her inclusion in the Best Supporting Actress category, when her "Ako Legal Wife" co-stars Zsazsa Padilla and Rufa Mae Quinto had competed for Best Actress (Padilla won).

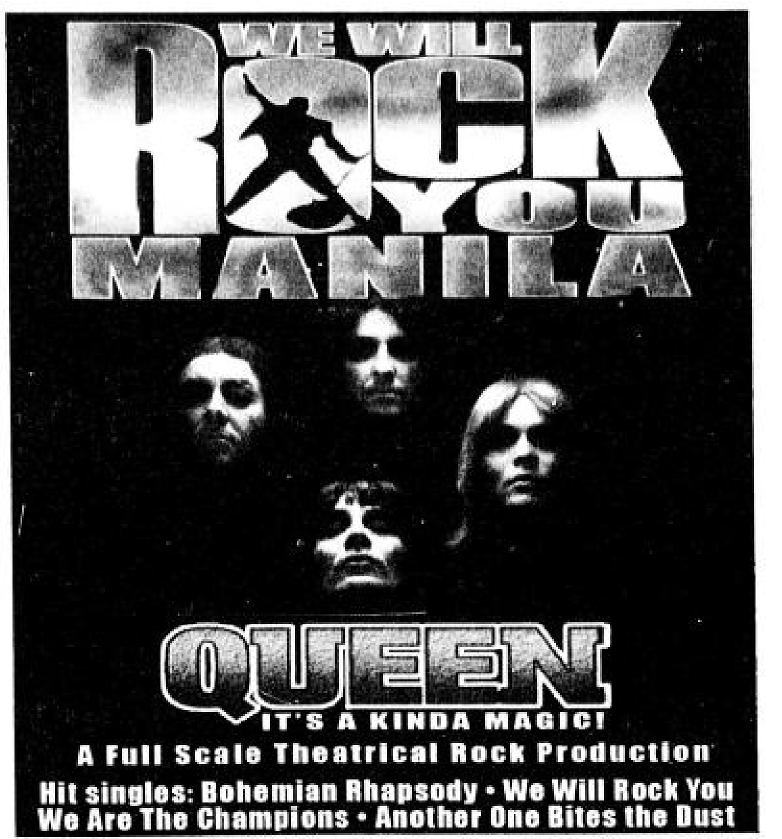
Picache recalled that, upon arrival at the Aliw Theater on awards night, she had been besieged by reporters. "They were all asking why. How was I supposed to answer them?"

When she went onstage to claim her trophy, she considered tackling the issue in her acceptance speech, but decided against it, certain she would sound "as if I were sour-graping."

If you ask her now, she'd rather grouse about the festival's failure to "showcase the best of Filipino films and tap new directors."

She said she couldn't understand why another film of hers submitted as an entry, Brillante Mendoza's "Kaleldo," had been shut out. Mendoza is the same independent director behind "Masahista," which won the video prize at the Locarno International Film Festival.

NO/ A2-4



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MMFF grosses analyzed

VIEWFINDER
Nestor U. Torre

THE 2005 METRO FILM FEST'S gross receipts are in, and "Enteng Kabisote, 2" tops the list with a whopping P108M, or almost one third of the festival's total take of around P350M.

"Enteng's" spectacular showing is significant because its special effects aren't as good—or expensive—as those in the film fest's two other big fantasy productions, "Exodus" and "Mulawin."

Clearly, other factors were working for the film to make it a crowd favorite. Logically, they would include the popularity of **Vic Sotto**'s signature title character, who has become almost like a number of the viewing family due to his long run on television, via **Sotto**'s sitcom.

This is an instructive point, because it proves that high-tech flourishes are still no match for good, old-fashioned, down-home "friendship" between stars and viewers.

"Enteng" also scores with the warm "family" feelings elicited by the loving and supportive members of the Kabisote household. They may bicker and fight, but when push comes to shove, they instantly get their family act together.

And, quite uniquely, this "real" family is counterpointed by the "fantasy" family of fairies Enteng has inadvertently married into.

It's this link between the two very different families living in parallel dimensions that makes the "Enteng" TV-film franchise especially entertaining for Filipino viewers.

In second place is "Exodus" and the film deserves its popularity because its special effects are particularly lovely.

The big disappointment is "Mulawin," which ended up only in third place. We thought that the fact that it, too, is a film based on a popular TV series would interest many moviegoers in the big-screen version. Well, so much for prognostication.

To be sure, some people involved in the production complain that it didn't get the movie houses it deserved—which if true, could have lowered its total gross.

Among the non-fantasy productions, the movie that did best at the box office was a comedy, "Ako Legal Wife." Its total take, P49M, was only a bit less than "Mulawin's" P55M, despite the huge disparity in their budgets.

[illegible] suggests that, for pro- [illegible] who don't want to spend [illegible] lot on expensive special [illegible] comedy could be the [illegible] mat to go for.

[illegible] latest "Shake, Rattle & [illegible] m made P32M—not bad [illegible] ovie franchise that's al- [illegible] n shaky, doddering legs.

[illegible] drama, "Blue Moon," did [illegible] 15M worth of busi- [illegible] disappointment, given [illegible] duction's relative quali- [illegible] of the reason could be [illegible] t that the movie opened [illegible] Jan. 1.

[illegible] film was also a "victim" [illegible] decision to push the festi- [illegible] wards night towards the [illegible] the filmfest. Thus, even [illegible] movie won the festival's [illegible] cture plum, it didn't have [illegible] more days to take advan- [illegible] f the special endorse- [illegible] to attract a bigger audi-

[illegible] aps the 2006 festival [illegible] go back to the early [illegible] s night concept, so the [illegible] rs would benefit from [illegible] citations. The jurors [illegible] just have to view the sec- [illegible] tch of movies before the [illegible] the awards, along with [illegible] up of movies opening on [illegible] 5.

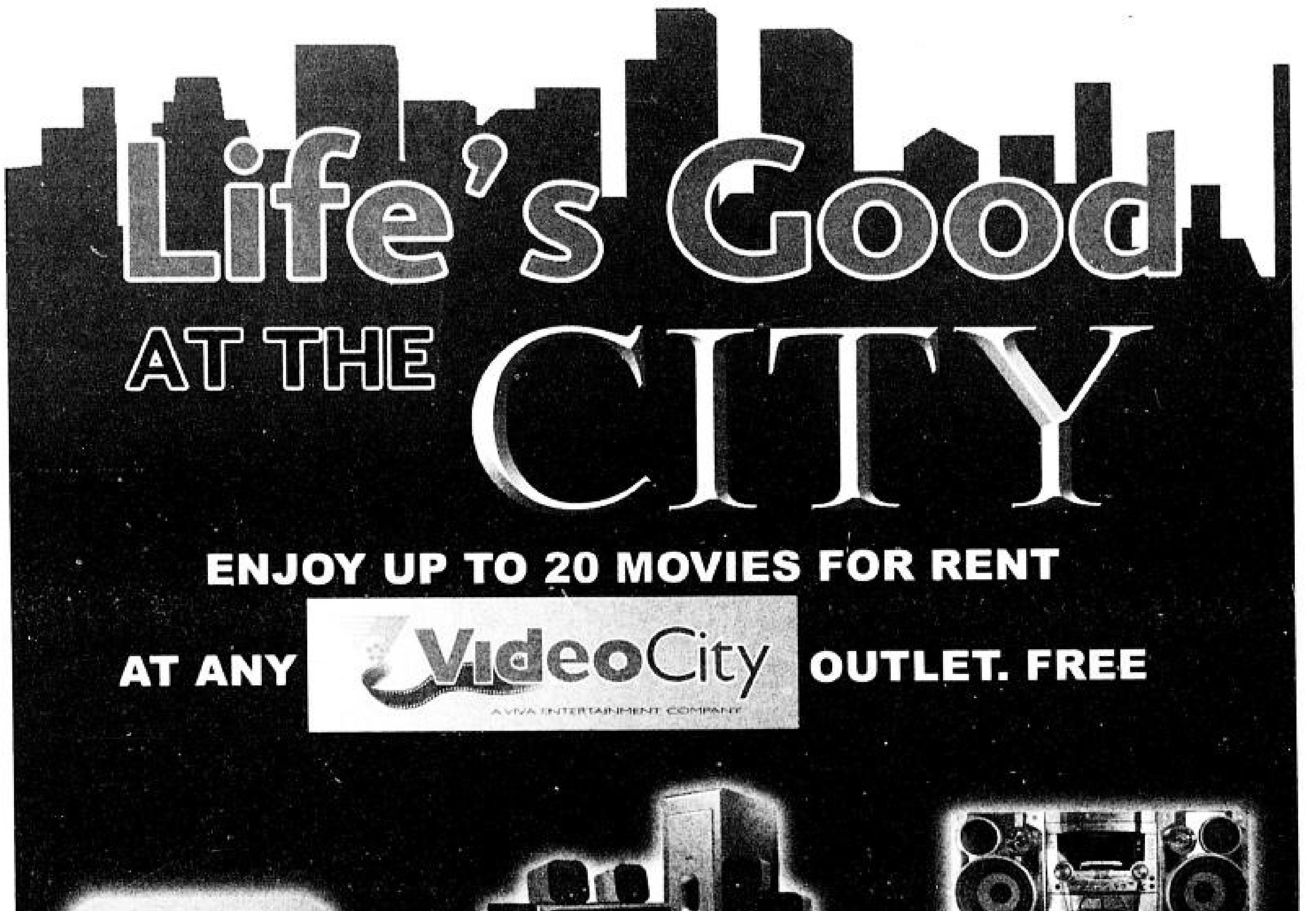
[illegible] psycho-thriller, "Kutob" [illegible] only P10M. This could in- [illegible] that Filipino viewers [illegible] groove to bloody slasher [illegible] s as much as their Ameri- [illegible] unterparts.

[illegible] nging up the festival's rear [illegible] wo actioners, "Terrorist [illegible] er" and "Lagot Ka Sa Kuya [illegible] nd a comedy, "Mourning

[illegible] action movies' poor [illegible] ng affirms some industry [illegible] e's feeling that action [illegible] have ceased to excite local [illegible] goers, and have been re- [illegible] d by panoramic adventure [illegible] r costume-fantasy pro- [illegible] ons.

[illegible] gue of Extraordinary [illegible] tlemen'

[illegible] Star Movies channel [illegible] ns "The League of Extraordi- [illegible] Gentlemen" tonight and to- [illegible] w night at 9 p.m. Stephen [illegible] ington's film stars Sean [illegible] ery and Peta Wilson.



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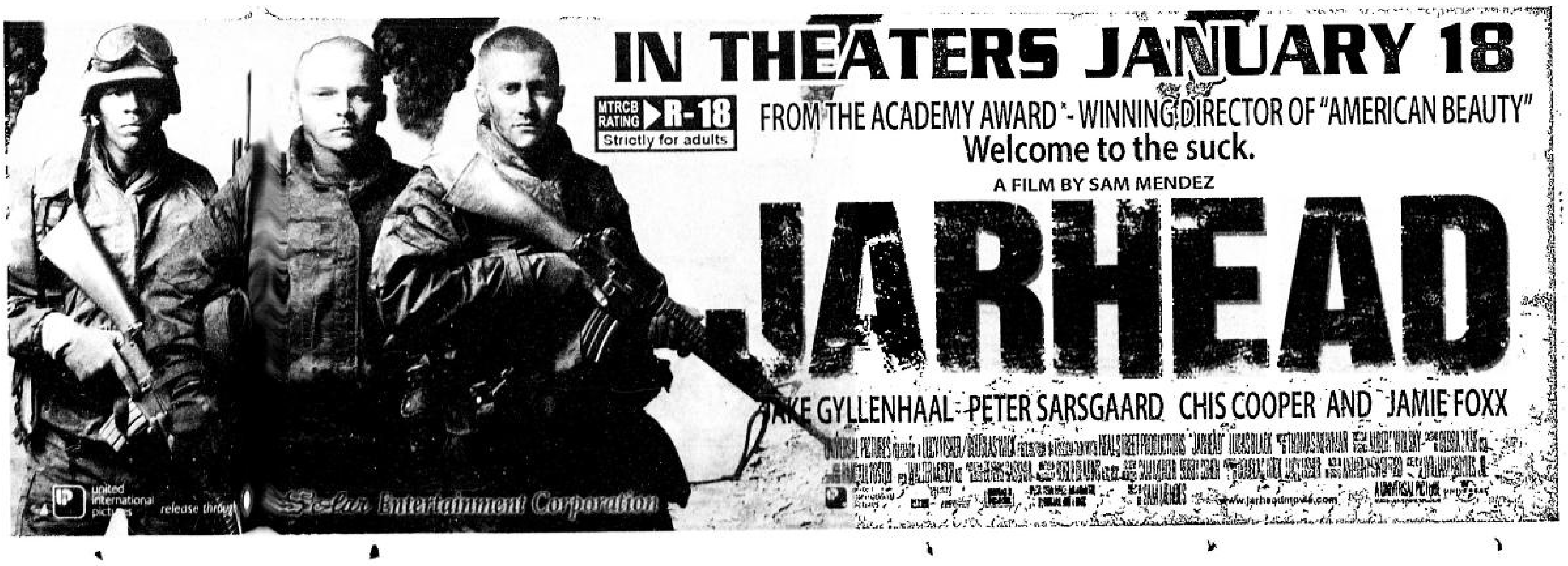

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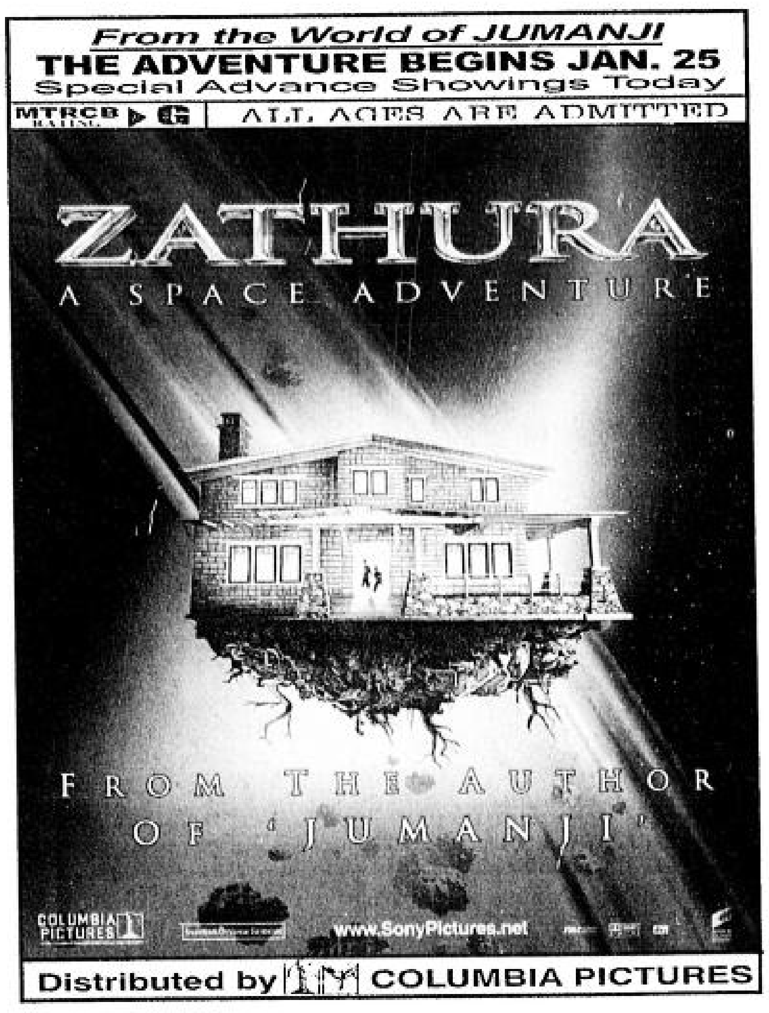
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2 CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30
GP

3 ZATHURA
1:35, 3:45, 5:55, 8:05, 10:15
GP

4 FAMILY STONE
1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00
PG-13

No complaints

'Sometimes good reviews are better than awards'

From page A2-3

"It's a pity," Picache sighed. "The MMFF could educate audiences about good filmmaking and proper awards-giving—for example, the right way of categorizing performances. Instead we are mired in scandal. We failed to maximize the festival's potential."

Even so, she didn't agree with critics calling for the MMFF's abolition.

"Such a move would benefit only Hollywood films," she asserted. "The holiday season is the only time when local movies are assured of doing well at the tills."

Her hope for the next MMFF: "The rules should be clear and everyone should observe them. The festival should be run by independent-minded people who understand filmmaking and have the well-being of the industry as priority. We need people who have no hidden agenda, to prevent conflicts of interests."

Although disillusioned by the goings-on in the mainstream industry, she's "very excited" about her foray into independent cinema.

"Kaleldo," graded B by the Cinema Evaluation Board, will open in theaters on March 8.

"It's inspiring to watch them work," she said of the "Kaleldo" team.

For her role as a lesbian, she has received raves from the most discerning critics.

"Sometimes good reviews are better than awards," she said, smiling, "especially if they come from people I respect deeply and the praise is shared by my co-workers."

That's not ...

From page A2-1

"I never expected to win awards for it [although] I did my best," he said. "[But] even without awards, I'm very pleased with the movie."

As for "I Will Always Love You," directed by Mac Alejandre, Gutierrez described it as a mature take on young love.

"We've grown older, Angel and I, and I feel that the story depicts that maturity in us."

Very likely part of his maturing was the move last month to his own condominium unit at The Fort.

"I don't have a maid," he said. "I do everything. Since it's new, my tendency is to keep things in order. I always eat out, though."

He said he invited his twin, Raymond, to move in with him, but that Raymond declined.

What is it like being Richard Gutierrez, matinee idol—and son of Annabel Rama?

With a grin and a twinkle in his eye, the actor said, "Difficult."

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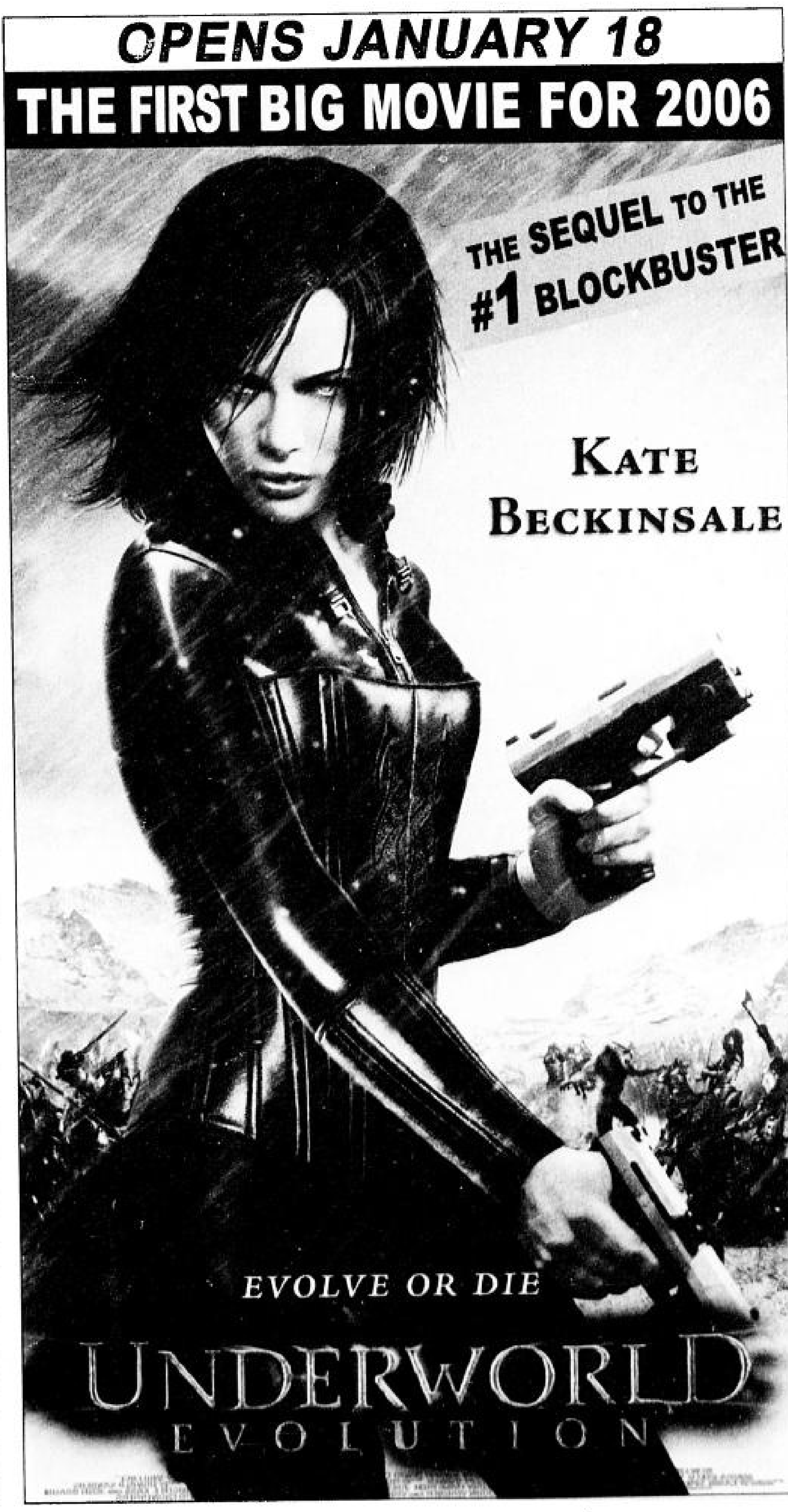

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5 GOLD THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
6 GOLD "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW
7 GOLD (DOLBY) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 (DOLBY STEREO) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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G4 GLORIETTA 4	FAMILY STONE	DON'T GIVE UP ON US	THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	KING KONG	THE BEAUTIFUL BOXER	THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	AKO LEGAL WIFE
GB1 GREENBELT 1	DON'T GIVE UP ON US	THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	KING KONG GUARANTEED SEATS	FAMILY STONE GUARANTEED SEATS	DON'T GIVE UP ON US GUARANTEED SEATS		
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JANUARY 16 (Mon.) & 17 (Tue.)

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GLORIETTA 1
GLORIETTA 4
GREENBELT 3
MARKET! MARKET!

For screening schedule, pls. call 729-7777
MTRCB Rating: General Audience (G)
Regular run begins January 25 at Ayala Cinemas

ZATHURA
A SPACE ADVENTURE
FROM THE AUTHOR OF 'JUMANJI'
COLUMBIA PICTURES
www.SonyPictures.net

Customer Service text hotline:	0917 6095900
Customer Service text hotline:	Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm Greenbelt - 757 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center -	842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu -	(032) 231 5342 loc 324

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Customer Service Hotline: 886-7515

Free Seating Cinemas: P80.00

1. ENTENG KABISOTE
2. BLUE MOON
3. AKO LEGAL WIFE
4. LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
5. MULAWIN

EVENTS! EVENTS!

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CINEMA ACCESS
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www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA 632-9116

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA • THX
1:00 3:50 6:40 9:30

2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

3 THE FAMILY STONE
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

4 ZATHURA
Sneak Preview

5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

6 KING KONG
11:30 3:00 6:30 10:00

7 EXODUS 12:40 3:00
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 5:20 7:40 10:00

8 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

9 SAINT ANGE
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

10 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:20 2:45
BLUE MOON 5:10 7:35 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA 10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50

2 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:00 2:00 4:00
BLUE MOON 6:15 8:05 10:00

3 ZATHURA
Sneak Preview

4 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:40

5 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50

6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:25 7:40 10:00

7 SAINT ANGE
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20

2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00

3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:15

4 KING KONG
1:35 5:10 9:00

5 SAINT. ANGE
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

6 BLUE MOON
1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00

7 ZATHURA
Sneak Preview

8 THE FAMILY STONE
1:40 4:00 6:30 9:00

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 BLUE MOON
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 EXODUS
5 KING KONG
6 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
7 THE FAMILY STONE
8 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 MULAWIN
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 SAINT ANGE

CHECK THIS OUT ▸▸

JARHEAD

showing on
JANUARY 18
Robinsons Movieworld
galleria • ermita • metro east
novaliches • pioneer • imus
dasmariñas • starmills, pampanga

MTRCB Rating: R-18

WELCOME TO THE SUCK.
JARHEAD

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 BLUE MOON
4 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

LIPA (043) 757-3684 (043) 312-5870

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 KING KONG
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 BLUE MOON

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 MULAWIN the MOVIE
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 The Chronicles of NARNIA
5 ZATHURA Sneak Preview

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 KING KONG
3 SAINT ANGE
4 The Chronicles of NARNIA
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 ZATHURA sneak Preview

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 BLUE MOON
4 KING KONG
5 The Chronicles of NARNIA
6 The Chronicles of NARNIA

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 The Chronicles of NARNIA
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 KING KONG
6 BLUE MOON

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
3 EXODUS
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 The Chronicles of NARNIA
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

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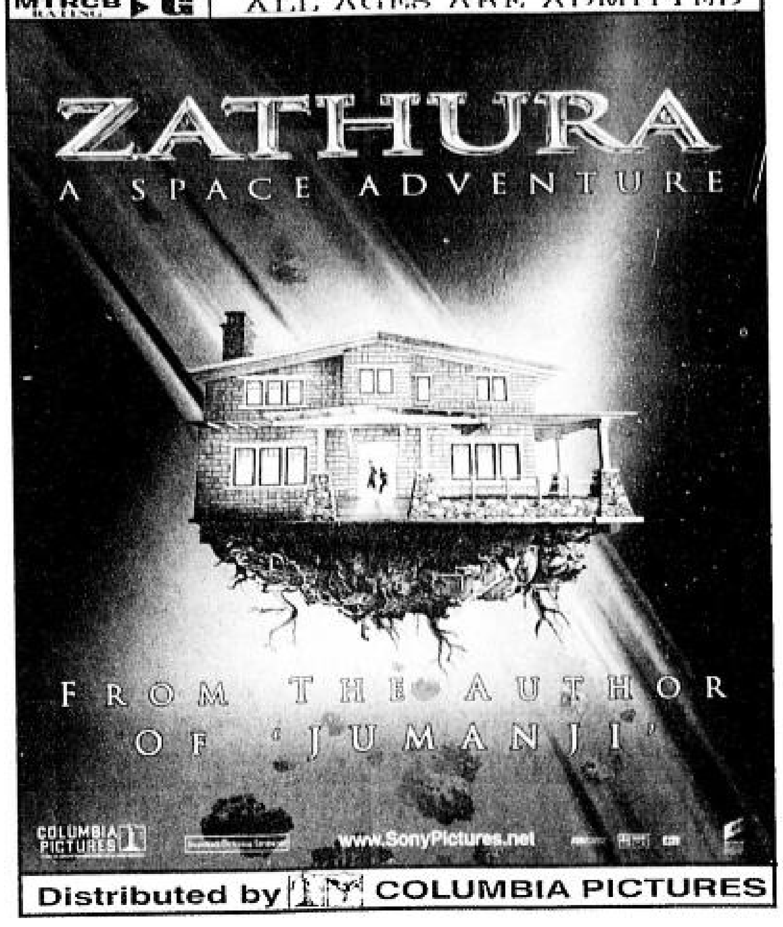

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POWER PLANT
CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

FAMILY STONE **PG13** 12:20,2:40,5:00, 7:20,9:40	**CHRONICLES OF NARNIA** **GP** 12:00,3:00	**ZATHURA** **GP** 12:50,3:05,5:20, 7:35,9:50
DON'T GIVE UP ON US **PG13** 12:20,2:45,5:10, 7:35,10:00	**ST. ANGE** **R13** 12:50,3:00,5:10,7:20,9:30	**CHRONICLES OF NARNIA** **GP** 1:10,4:10,7:10,10:10

MOVIES AND SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR VERIFICATION CALL 898-1440/41

TRIPLE TREAT The Surf Gift Love promo was capped with the "Surf Paskoncert sa Pasiklab," topbilled by singing champ Sarah Geronimo and attended by 60,000 fans last Dec. 17. The Surf family was there, too—Lumen's twins are shown here with Sarah.

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5) Quezon City
For inquiries, call:
687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	**KINGKONG** 11:30, 3:10, 6:50, 10:30 PG-13
2	**CHRONICLES OF NARNIA** 1:30, 4:30, 7;30, 10:30 GP
3	**ZATHURA** 1:35, 3:45, 5:55, 8:05, 10:15 GP
4	**FAMILY STONE** 1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00 PG-13

No complaints

'Sometimes good reviews are better than awards'

From page A2-3

"It's a pity," Picache sighed. "The MMFF could educate audiences about good filmmaking and proper awards-giving—for example, the right way of categorizing performances. Instead we are mired in scandal. We failed to maximize the festival's potential."

Even so, she didn't agree with critics calling for the MMFF's abolition.

"Such a move would benefit only Hollywood films," she asserted. "The holiday season is the only time when local movies are assured of doing well at the tills."

Her hope for the next MMFF: "The rules should be clear and everyone should observe them. The festival should be run by independent-minded people who understand filmmaking and have the well-being of the industry as priority. We need people who have no hidden agenda, to prevent conflicts of interests."

Although disillusioned by the goings-on in the mainstream industry, she's "very excited" about her foray into independent cinema.

"Kaleldo," graded B by the Cinema Evaluation Board, will open in theaters on March 8.

"It's inspiring to watch them work," she said of the "Kaleldo" team.

For her role as a lesbian, she has received raves from the most discerning critics.

"Sometimes good reviews are better than awards," she said, smiling, "especially if they come from people I respect deeply and the praise is shared by my co-workers."

That's not . . .

From page A2-1

"I never expected to win awards for it [although] I did my best," he said. "[But] even without awards, I'm very pleased with the movie."

As for "I Will Always Love You," directed by Mac Alejandre, Gutierrez described it as a mature take on young love.

"We've grown older, Angel and I, and I feel that the story depicts that maturity in us."

Very likely part of his maturing was the move last month to his own condominium unit at The Fort.

"I don't have a maid," he said. "I do everything. Since it's new, my tendency is to keep things in order. I always eat out, though."

He said he invited his twin, Raymond, to move in with him, but that Raymond declined.

What is it like being Richard Gutierrez, matinee idol—and son of Annabel Rama?

With a grin and a twinkle in his eye, the actor said, "Difficult."

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
6th floor Shangrila Plaza EDSA corner
Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City
Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG PG13
2 (DOLBY) CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GP
3 (DOLBY) FAMILY STONE PG13
4 (DOLBY) ZATHURA GP
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GP

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DTS) BLUE MOON
2 (SDDS) KING KONG
3 (DTS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 (GOLD-DTS) FAMILY STONE
5 GOLD THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
6 GOLD (SRD) "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW
7 GOLD (DOLBY) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 (DOLBY SRD) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
9 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG
2 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 (DOLBY) ZATHURA
4 (DOLBY) FAMILY STONE

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW
2 (DTS) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 BLUE MOON

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 KUTOB
2 (DOLBY) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DTS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DOLBY) EXODUS
4 (DTS) KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 KING KONG
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 (DOLBY) DON'T GIVE UP ON US

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)
1 KING KONG
2 MULAWIN

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor.
Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 KING KONG

Blue Wave MARQUINTON
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street,
Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 (DOLBY) "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW
3 (DOLBY) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW
5 ENTENG KABISOTE-2

starmall EDSA SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
5 "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW

MARKET!MARKET! Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 KING KONG
4 ENTENG KABISOTE -2

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8604286, 5433994
1 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW
4 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 , 833.3274
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue
(Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
2 KING KONG

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4746
1 KING KONG
2 ENTENG KABISOTE -2

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) KING KONG
2 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
4 (DTS) TERRORIST HUNTER

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG
2 "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW
3 (DTS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
5 BLUE MOON

SM THEATRES
SM Pacific Mall Cabanatuan,
Telephone No. (044) 600-3025
1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 ENTENG KABISOTE -2

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) EXODUS
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 (DTS EX) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 ENTENG KABISOTE -2

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE -2

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 BLUE MOON
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
3 KUTOB
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-5271
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 KING KONG

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 (DTS) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 EXODUS
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 ENTENG KABISOTE -2
2 SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

OPENS JANUARY 18!
MTRCB PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

Jennifer ANISTON
Kevin COSTNER
Shirley MACLAINE
Mark RUFFALO
Rumor has it...
Based on a true rumor.
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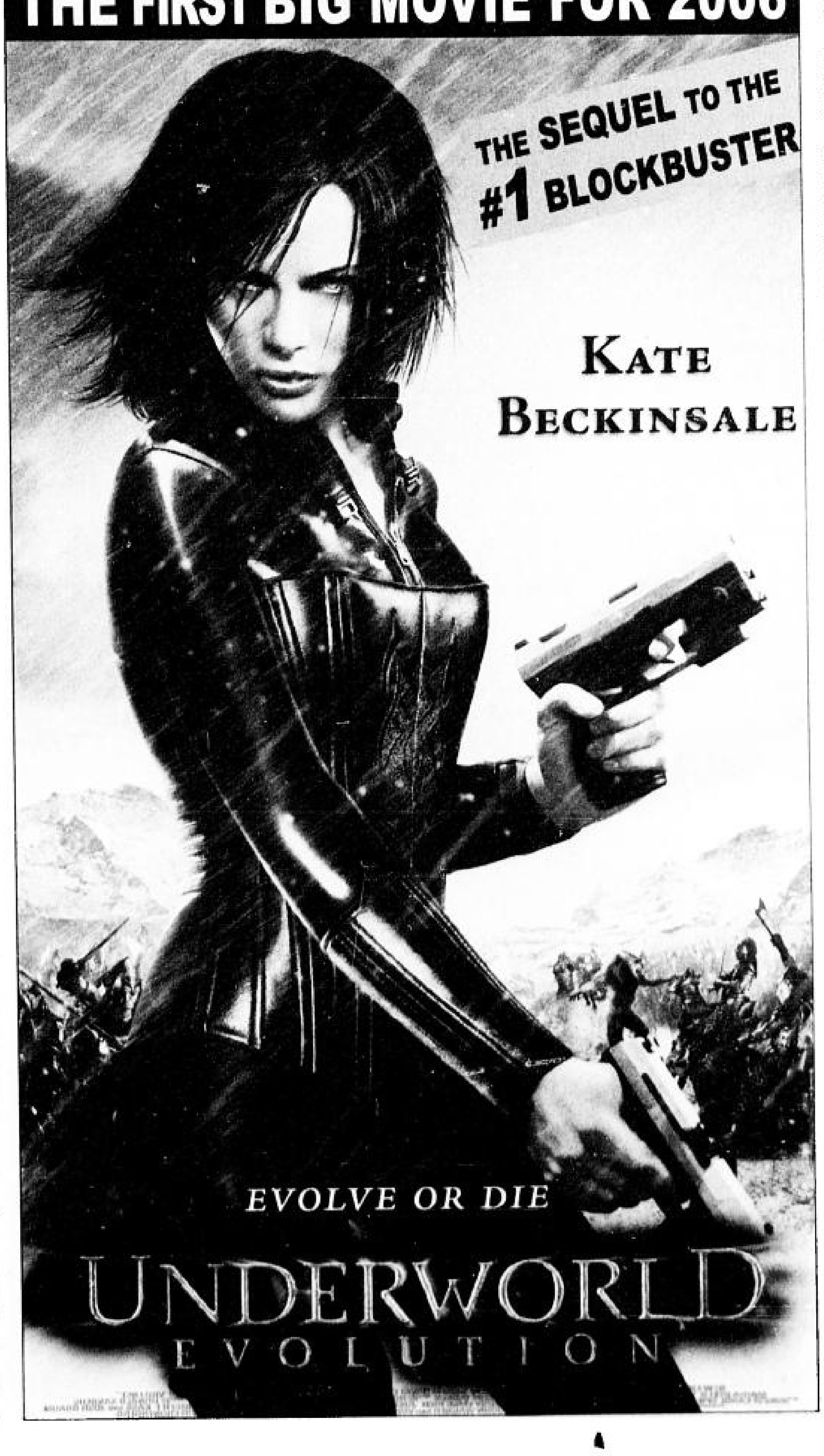
OPENS JANUARY 18
THE FIRST BIG MOVIE FOR 2006



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AYALA GREENBELT

Jazz Festival
January 23, 2006

GREENBELT 1 Onstage

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AYALA CINEMAS

AYALA CINEMAS

THX

Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	4 ST. ANGE
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 FAMILY STONE	2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	3 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 KING KONG	5 THE BEAUTIFUL BOXER	6 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	7 AKO LEGAL WIFE
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 KING KONG GUARANTEED SEATS	4 FAMILY STONE GUARANTEED SEATS	5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US		
	3 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	4 KING KONG	5 FAMILY STONE	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	4 THE BEAUTIFUL BOXER

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SPECIAL SNEAK PREVIEW

FROM THE AUTHOR OF 'JUMANJI'

ZATHURA
A SPACE ADVENTURE

JANUARY 16 (Mon.) & 17 (Tue.)

ALABANG TOWN CENTER
GLORIETTA 1
GLORIETTA 4
GREENBELT 3
MARKET! MARKET!

For screening schedule, pls. call 729-7777
MTRCB Rating: General Audience (G)
Regular run begins January 25 at Ayala Cinemas

AYALA CINEMAS

ZATHURA
A SPACE ADVENTURE
FROM THE AUTHOR OF JUMANJI
COLUMBIA PICTURES
www.SonyPictures.net

Customer Service text hotline:	0917 6095900
Customer Service text hotline:	Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm Greenbelt - 757 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center -	842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu -	(032) 231 5342 loc 324

All-Digital Cinemas

MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds
Developed and managed by Ayala Land, Inc.

Movies are subject to change without prior notice.
Customer Service Hotline: 886-7515

Free Seating Cinemas: P80.00

① ENTENG KABISOTE
② BLUE MOON
③ AKO LEGAL WIFE
④ LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO
⑤ MULAWIN

EVENTS! EVENTS!

MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds

WELCOME 2006 SALE

JANUARY 13-31, 2006
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DISCOUNT IN ALL PARTICIPATING STORES!

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-003, Series of 2006

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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA • THX
1:00 3:50 6:40 9:30

2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

3 THE FAMILY STONE
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

4 ZATHURA
Sneak Preview

5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

6 KING KONG
11:30 3:00 6:30 10:00

7 EXODUS 12:40 3:00
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 5:20 7:40 10:00

8 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

9 SAINT ANGE
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

10 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:20 2:45
BLUE MOON 5:10 7:35 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA 10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50

2 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:00 2:00 4:00
BLUE MOON 6:15 8:05 10:00

3 ZATHURA
Sneak Preview

4 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:40

5 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50

6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:25 7:40 10:00

7 SAINT ANGE
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20

2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
12.00 3:00 6:00 9:00

3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:15

4 KING KONG
1:35 5:10 9:00

5 SAINT. ANGE
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

6 BLUE MOON
1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00

7 ZATHURA
Sneak Preview

8 THE FAMILY STONE
1:40 4:00 6:30 9:00

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 BLUE MOON
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 EXODUS
5 KING KONG
6 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
7 THE FAMILY STONE
8 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 MULAWIN
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 SAINT ANGE

CHECK THIS OUT ▸▸

JARHEAD

showing on
JANUARY 18
Robinsons Movieworld
galleria • ermita • metro east
novaliches • pioneer • imus
dasmariñas • starmills, pampanga

MTRCB Rating: R-18

AMERICAN BEAUTY
WELCOME TO THE SUCK
JARHEAD

STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 BLUE MOON
4 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
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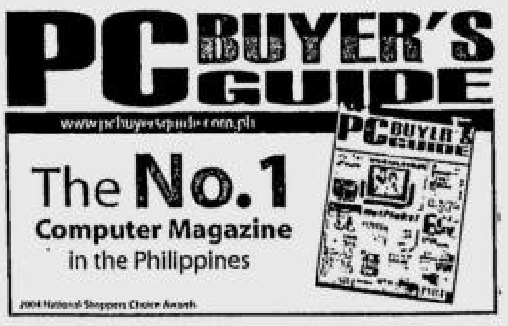
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MRT project to link Metro to Rizal

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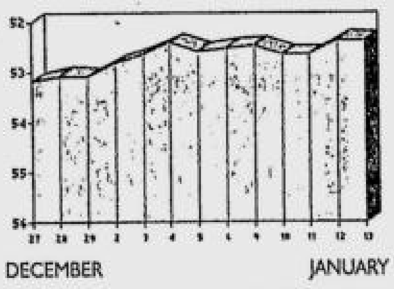

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STOCK MARKET

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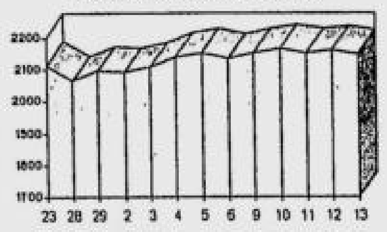

(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks seen to rise

STOCKS continued to rally last week, touching a 10-month high, on easing fiscal concerns and lower interest rates, analysts said.

Grace Cerdenia of online brokerage 2TradeAsia.com said the key catalyst that has been aiding sentiment was the government's fiscal-balancing story and the resulting stable interest rate outlook.

She said trends from the Bureau of Treasury's auctions have supported this thought, after the Treasury rejected high bids for the 90-day tenor last week.

"Also, local monetary authorities maintained benchmark interest rates steady, driven by stable trend expectation in consumer prices. While the peso's strength has partly aided the picture, stabilization within P52.40 to P52.70 may ensue, unless signifi-

STOCKS/ B5

Move seen to decongest Ortigas-Shaw

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT HAS RECEIVED an unsolicited build-operate-transfer proposal for a $918.6-million mass railway transit project, tagged as the MRT Line 8, that aims to link Metro Manila with the booming province of Rizal.

Documents from the National Economic and Development Authority showed that the MRT-8 project was offered by American Transport Systems Corp. to decongest the Ortigas/Shaw corridor by cutting across Angono, Taytay and Cainta and connecting with MRT Line 2 and Line 3.

The project consists of a 16.856-kilometer elevated dual-track guideway from Sta. Mesa, Manila, to Taytay and a 3.263-km at-grade (a junction at which two or more transport routes cross at the same level) section from Taytay to Angono.

It will have provision for further extension up to Sta. Cruz, Laguna, and passenger connections to the existing rail systems in Metro Manila, specifically the Shaw Blvd. Station of MRT-3 on Edsa, and the Araneta station of LRT Line 2 along Aurora Blvd.

The project was laid on the table as early as 2004 but has yet to receive even a first-pass approval from the government's inter-agency Investment Coordination Committee. But the project had drawn support from the local government units of Rizal itself as well as the Department of Transportation and Communication.

Budget Secretary Romulo Neri, who used to head the Neda, said: "It's a good proposal. Rizal has 2,000 hectares (of idle property) it wants to develop, so it's good."

Neri said these MRT systems in the pipeline would be more viable if the proponents included some real estate development compo

MRT/ B5

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DOTC wants ICC to break $4-B MRT 7 impasse /B7

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RP requesting $535M in Japanese ODA this year

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PHILIPPINES WILL SEEK SOME $535 million worth of loans from the Japanese government to support the Arroyo administration's infrastructure and environmental development agenda for 2006.

Finance Undersecretary Roberto Tan, in charge of the government's foreign borrowings, told reporters that the loans would finance three projects, namely the Cebu South Coastal Road, the Infrastructure Logistics Assistance Facility, and the Environmental Development Project.

These are part of the shortlist of items that the Philippine government will present to the Japan Bank for International Cooperaton (JBIC) for funding under the 27th Yen Loan Package.

Tan said Japanese representatives were set to arrive in Manila in the next few days to discuss and decide on the components of the loan package. Every year, JBIC prepares a package of official development assistance for beneficiary-countries like the Philippines.

The Cebu South Coastal Road, one of the government's targeted infrastructure developments, is estimated to cost $42 million. The project proponent is the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), which has already confirmed that the estimated loan amount could be covered by its future budget.

Credit facilities are being sought for the two other projects, with the loans to be coursed through the state-owned Development Bank of the Philippines for relending to private or public sector entities that will en-

RP REQUESTING/ B5

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Oil prices on the rise, DOE says

By Abigail L. Ho

MOTORISTS MAY NO LONGER ENJOY FUEL price rollbacks in the coming weeks as world oil prices have again started to escalate.

Zenaida Monsada, director of the Department of Energy's oil industry management bureau, said the best that motorists could expect was for fuel prices to remain at existing levels.

The possibility of a rollback at this time was very slim, she said. There was even a big chance of a price hike.

"Prices in the world market have really gone up. There's hardly any chance of a rollback," she said in a telephone interview.

According to data from the DOE, the regional benchmark Dubai crude had soared to a January average of $56.86 a barrel from the December average of $53.20 a barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products also surged to $66.64 in the first 12 days of January, climbing by more than $5 from $61.01 a barrel last month.

MOPS-based diesel shot up to an average of $71.99 a barrel in the Jan. 1-12 period from only $67.03 a barrel in December.

Despite rising international prices, Consumer and Oil Price Watch chair Raul Concepcion said motorists could actually expect more stable fuel prices this year compared with the last two years.

In an earlier interview, he said factors that would contribute to the stability in prices include the decision of the United States and other big oil users to more aggressively tap alternative energy sources, including nuclear, coal-to-gasoline and ethanol.

He also said Russia was expected to pump and refine more oil to address global demand.

As of Jan. 4, premium unleaded gasoline retails at between P35.65 and P36.90 a liter, diesel at between P29.40 and P33.15 a liter, and kerosene at between P32.15 and P35.30 a liter.

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RP policies failed, economics guru says

By Ronnel W. Domingo

POLICIES THAT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES like the Philippines adopted in the past decades have failed to deliver because economic principles were not applied, according to a New York-based expert.

William Easterly, an economics professor at the New York University, said in his book, "The Elusive Quest for Growth: Economists' Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics," that governments could "kill (economic) growth" through inflation, high taxes, supply-side regulations and controls and trade and investment restrictions.

Easterly, who is visiting the country for lectures this week, argues that a politically regulated and manipulated economy leads to an environment of corruption that defeats efforts toward development.

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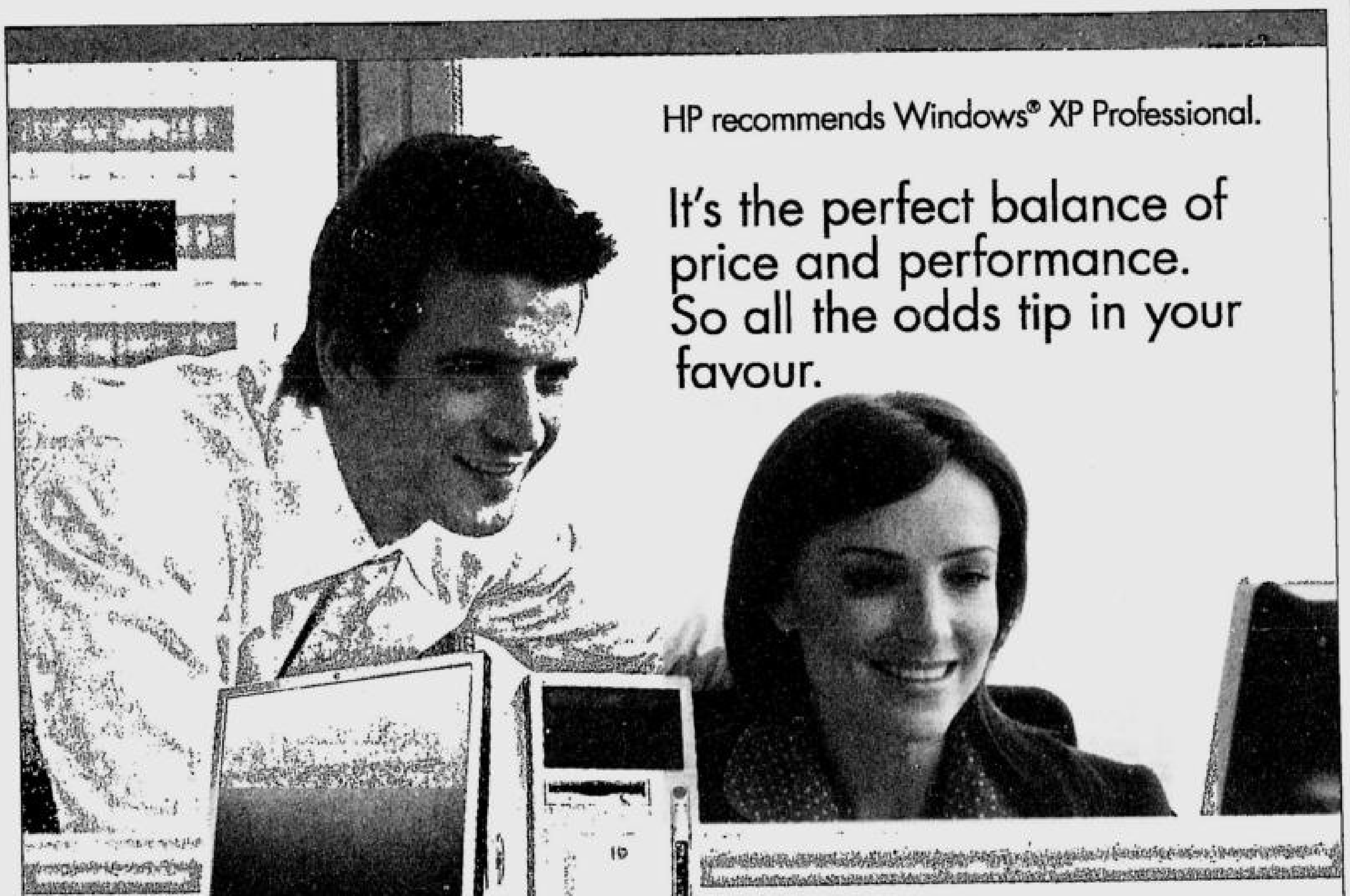

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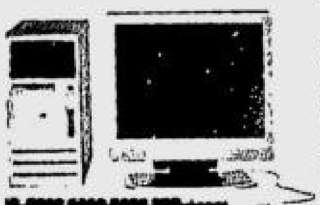

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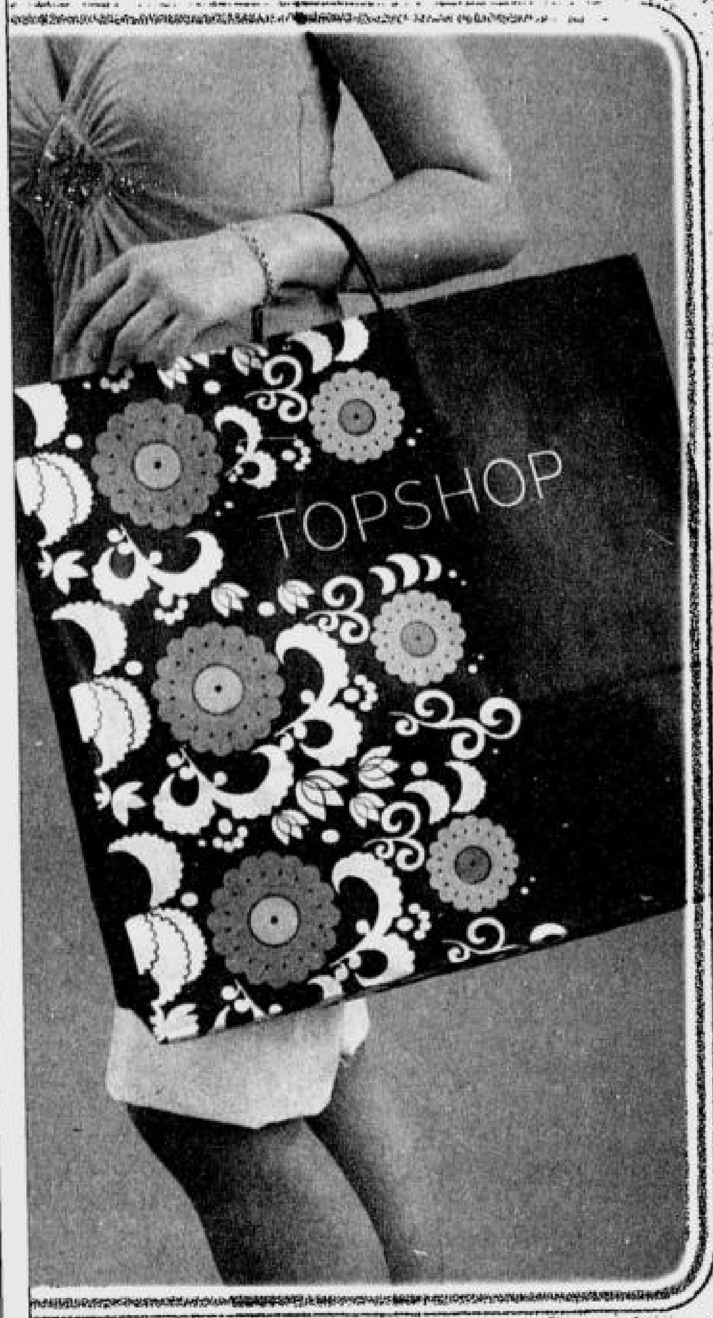

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Jan. 13, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	1,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36	36	35	35.5	329,800
Bank of the Phil. Islands	56	56.5	56	56.5	334,800
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	2,500
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	400
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	65	65.5	63	63	346,500
International Exch. Bank	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	60,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33.5	34	33.5	33.5	1,067,000
Philippine National Bank	33.5	33.5	32.5	32.5	71,000
Phil. Savings Bank	35	35	35	35	10,000
Security Bank Corp.	36	36	36	36	170,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	31	31.5	31	31.5	1,200
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	800
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	77,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	141	141	140	140	5,050
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2145	2160	2145	2160	490
Ivantage Corp.	0.62	0.64	0.62	0.64	50,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	52	52.5	51.5	51.5	1,316,700
Manila Electric Co. A	14.25	14.25	14	14	20,600
Manila Electric Co. B	22	22	21.25	21.5	558,700
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.4	1,567,000
Petron Corp.	5	5.1	4.95	4.95	4,549,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.23	500,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	40,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.45	3.5	3.45	3.5	3,629,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23	23	22.75	22.75	42,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41	41	41	41	258,400
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.38	1.46	1.38	1.46	810,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64	63.5	64	102,500
San Miguel Corp. B	88	88	87.5	88	53,900
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.75	18.75	6,100
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	280,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.35	3,210,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.88	1.08	0.88	1.06	33,430,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.87	0.88	0.87	0.88	50,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.65	4.65	4.6	4.65	2,159,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.84	0.85	0.84	0.85	100,000
CHEMICALS					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.68	0.68	0.67	0.67	760,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	900,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	77,000,000
Ayala Corp.	340	340	332.5	335	128,660
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.51	0.52	0.5	0.52	1,030,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	10,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	1,500,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	141,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.87	0.87	0.86	0.86	500,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	20,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	24,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.22	1.24	1.18	1.2	7,970,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.3	3.15	3.15	1,768,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	265,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.04	1.18	1.04	1.18	430,000
JG Summit Holdings Inc.	4.05	4.25	4.05	4.15	2,924,000
Medco Holdings	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.32	730,000
Pacifica	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	5,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.25	27,220,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.04	1.1	1.04	1.1	27,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	90,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.135	0.135	1,400,000
SM Investments Corp.	240	240	239	240	552,540
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.11	0.125	0.11	0.12	4,200,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	10.5	10.5	10.25	10.5	6,190,200
Belle Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	1,760,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	8,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.17	0.185	0.17	0.175	4,720,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.18	1.1	1.14	2,870,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.92	1.92	1.9	1.9	100,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.22	0.235	0.22	0.22	4,150,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc	0.24	0.26	0.24	0.26	1,100,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.46	0.48	0.46	0.47	17,400,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.73	0.74	0.72	0.72	240,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.54	1.54	1.5	1.5	3,083,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	600,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.195	0.2	0.195	0.2	750,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	660,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.38	1.38	2,921,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.36	0.37	0.36	0.36	8,730,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.1	0.105	0.1	0.105	300,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	6.1	6.1	6	6	160,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.13	0.135	0.13	0.135	1,090,000
SM Development Corp.	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44	149,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.7	7.8	7.7	7.8	3,710,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	1,800,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12.75	12.75	12.25	12.25	74,400
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	0.93	0.95	0.93	0.93	3,040,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	760	765	750	750	13,770
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.45	3.5	1,699,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1845	1845	1840	1845	89,950
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	150,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.048	0.049	0.048	0.049	18,000,000
Philweb Corp.	0.015	0.016	0.015	0.016	384,900,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	10.5	10.5	10.25	10.25	578,400
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.26	1.38	1.26	1.38	7,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.54	1.64	1.54	1.6	3,848,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.9	2.9	2.85	2.85	176,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	150,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.35	0.27	0.33	2,690,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	9	9	9	9	4,000
Far Eastern University	560	560	560	560	40
Ipeople Inc.	3.05	3.05	3.05	3.05	33,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.38	1.4	344,000
Paxys Inc.	6.5	7	6.5	6.9	4,791,000
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.22	1.24	1.2	1.22	6,112,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.44	1.58	1.44	1.58	8,465,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0075	0.0075	0.007	0.007	32,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6	6.2	6	6	1,594,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.7	7.7	7.5	7.5	21,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.6	1.64	1.6	1.62	129,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	2,100,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.3	0.31	0.29	0.31	16,620,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	33,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	84,900,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.48	1.56	1.46	1.56	8,756,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	2.16	2.34	2.16	2.3	24,335,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	26	26	25	25.5	1,409,400
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	100,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	500,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	51,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	620,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.75	3.9	77,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	400
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	12.5	12.5	12.25	12.25	190,900

CURRENCIES

January 15, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.830634	1.000000	52.4530
Japan	Yen	0.007269	0.008751	0.4590
United Kingdom	Pound	1.462082	1.760200	92.3278
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.107159	0.129009	6.7669
Switzerland	Franc	0.646206	0.777968	40.8068
Canada	Dollar	0.714401	0.860067	45.1131
Singapore	Dollar	0.510719	0.614855	32.2510
Australia	Dollar	0.623880	0.751089	39.3969
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.203857	2.653224	139.1696
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.221497	0.266660	13.9871
Brunei	Dollar	0.509154	0.612970	32.1521
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000089	0.000107	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.021074	0.025371	1.3308
UAE	Dirham	0.226158	0.272272	14.2815
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.203900	63.1482
Argentina	Peso	0.272876	0.328515	17.2316
Brazil	Real	0.366564	0.441306	23.1478
Denmark	Kroner	0.134038	0.161368	8.4642
India	Rupee	0.018882	0.022732	1.1924
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.222065	0.267344	14.0230
Mexico	New Peso	0.078451	0.094447	4.9540
New Zealand	Dollar	0.575710	0.693097	36.3550
Korea	Won	0.000853	0.001027	0.0539
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.026093	0.031413	1.6477

PDEx GS BENCHMARKS

As of Friday, Jan. 13, 2006 (4:30 p.m.)

Tenor	Today	Change from previous day	Change from previous week	Change from previous month
1M	6.0000	(0.13)	0.00	(0.25)
3M	6.0000	(0.13)	0.00	(0.25)
6M	6.7500	0.03	(0.20)	(0.75)
1Y	7.7250	0.00	(0.18)	(0.53)
2Y	8.2250	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.93)
3Y	8.4000	0.03	0.00	(0.95)
4Y	8.5000	0.00	0.00	(0.95)
5Y	8.7500	0.00	(0.05)	(1.08)
7Y	9.2000	0.00	0.07	(0.80)
10Y	9.3750	(0.13)	(0.50)	(0.85)
20Y	11.1250	0.00	(0.10)	(0.50)
25Y	11.5000	(0.13)	0.00	(0.38)

NOTE: PDEx Benchmarks are calculated from the weighted average yields of done transactions, best midrates, or best firm bid rates as the case maybe for 12 tenors at 4 p.m. daily. The PDEx Benchmarks may be used to compare interest rate bases for loans, deposits and other financial instruments that have variable rates.

PDEx TRADING VOLUME

Weekly Total

Instrument	Volume (in million pesos)
FXTNs	8,564.8
TBILLs	570.1
RTBs	187.5
TOTAL	9,322.3

Unified GSIS-SSS position on BDO proposal sought

THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE System appealed to the Social Security System (SSS) to join it in a unified position in connection with the bid of Banco de Oro Universal Bank (BDO) to merge with Equitable-PCI Bank (EPCIB).

GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia made the appeal to SSS president Corazon de la Paz "in the interest of millions of individual government and private sector employees who are the real owners and beneficiaries of both GSIS and SSS."

The GSIS and SSS, which are both government-owned and -controlled corporations, own 41 percent of EPCIB, with the SSS holding a stake of 29 percent, and the GSIS, 12 percent. BDO is owned by Henry Sy, the real estate and retail magnate.

A statement quoted Garcia as saying: "The GSIS and SSS stakes in EPCIB represent the investments and savings of the millions of GSIS and SSS members who depend on these pension funds to guarantee their income after retirement and help them cope with emergencies, such as ill health and natural calamities. As their trustees and also as government representatives, we must therefore join together in a concerted effort to protect their best interests and those of their families. The government has also a stake in the issue as contributor to the pension funds and as protector of the workers' welfare and interests.

"We must therefore study the offer of BDO with the strictest objectivity, having in mind the interests of the real owners of GSIS and SSS, which we have undertaken to protect and to promote. I therefore ask the SSS to join GSIS in a united stand through block voting of our shares in any showdown on the issue at hand."

SMBB posts 13% revenue growth

By Elizabeth L.Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL BAODING BREWERY (SMBB), the beer unit of San Miguel Corp. in North China, posted a 13-percent growth in revenue last year to $16.8 million.

In a statement, San Miguel said its brewery in North China posted a 22-percent increase in sales volume last year. However, no figure was disclosed.

SMBB'S Blue Star Beer brand accounted for 96 percent of the beer revenue in Northern China. Other brands contributing to the revenue growth included San Miguel Pale Pilsen, San Mig Light and Valor which, like Blue Star, are perennial winners of medals of excellence in the international product quality competition, Monde Selection.

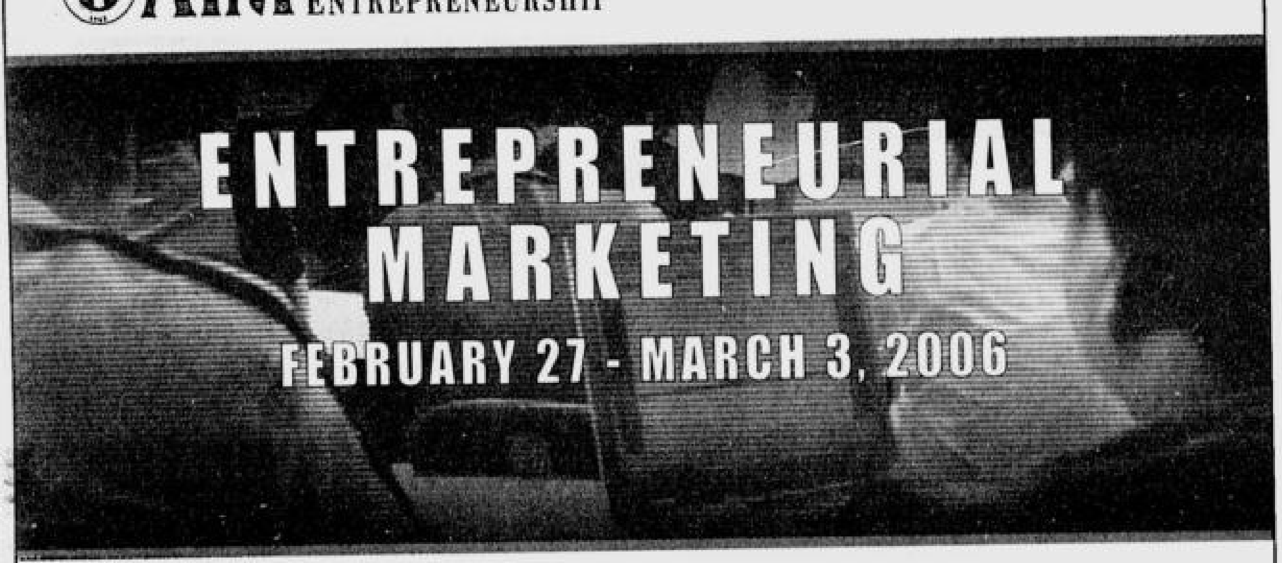
SMBB earlier launched a new campaign for Blue Star Beer, now dubbed as the "City Beer of Baoding." The campaign "101 reasons to Love Baoding" is supported by the Baoding City government. The campaign is supported by an under-the-crown consumer promo, a Blue Star Beer festival and Blue Star Harvest event.

Pitching in to Blue Star's continuing gains is its participation in the annual Baoding Beer Festival.

"Blue Star has become one of the local people's most favorite brands and has contributed largely to spurring the city's economy and fostering the cultural life of the people," said Baoding Deputy Mayor Gao Tianmin.

Blue Star Hao Shuang, which targeted the economy segment, was also launched last year in counties near Baoding City, capitalizing on the popularity of Blue Star.

AIM ASIAN CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP



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  - Knowing your market place
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SHARES AVAILABLE

CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club A/B*	1,100,000/Pls. Call*	
Alta Vista B/Corp.*	-	300,000/300,000*
Baguio Country Club	-	500,000
Calatagan Golf	Pls. Call	40,000
Camp John Hay	180,000	150,000
Canlubang Golf	530,000	Pls. Call
Canyon Woods	120,000	-
Capitol Hills	70,000	
Cebu Country Club	1,500,000	1,300,000
Celebrity Sports	120,000	100,000
City Sports Club Cebu	-	300,000
Club Filipino	120,000	
Eagleridge A/B*/C**	180,000	150,000/290,000*/350,000**
Eastridge A/B*	Pls. Call	
Evercrest	85,000	
Forest Hills A/B*/C**	120,000/200,000*	150,000*
Luisita Golf	Pls. Call	270,000
Manila Golf Corporate	Pls. Call	
Manila Golf Individual	Pls. Call	11,000,000
Manila Polo	Pls. Call	2,100,000
Manila Southwoods A/B*	370,000/Pls. Call*	300,000
Makati Sports Club	200,000	165,000
Manila Yacht Club Ind	350,000	250,000
Metropolitan Club A/B*	120,000/150,000*	90,000
Mimosa Ind./C2*/C3**	Pls. Call	150,000
Mt. Malarayat A	230,000	
Orchard A/B*/C**	170,000/Pls. Call*/400,000**	150,000
Puerto Azul	Pls. Call	
Punta Fuego	Pls. Call	
Quezon City Sports Club	160,000	130,000
Riviera Golf A/B*/C**	90,000/250,000**	130,000*
Rockwell Leisure Club	Pls. Call	180,000
Royale Tagaytay CC	80,000	
Sherwood A/B*/C**	70,000/150,000**	80,000*
Spa & Lodge	520,000	
Sta. Elena Golf A/B*	Pls. Call	1,100,000/1,600,000*
The Palms Country Club	Pls. Call	380,000
Tagaytay Country Club	330,000	300,000
Tagaytay Highlands	730,000	680,000
Tagaytay Midlands	Pls. Call	600,000
The Country Club	2,000,000	
Tower Club	Pls. Call	
Valley Golf	200,000	180,000
Valle Verde Ind	150,000	
Wack Wack Golf	6,400,000	6,000,000

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CLUB	SELLER	BUYER
Alabang Country Club "A" (Filipino)	1,150,000	-
Alabang Country Club "B" (Foreigner)	1,175,000	1,050,000
Anvaya Cove Beach & Nature Club	Please Call	
Baguio Country Club	550,000	500,000
Calatagan Golf Club "A"	40,000	20,000
Calatagan Golf Club "B"	70,000	-
Camp John Hay	200,000	165,000
Canlubang	550,000	490,000
Capitol Hills	70,000	45,000
Cebu Country Club	-	1,300,000
Celebrity Sports Club	120,000	-
Club Filipino	140,000	-
Eagleridge "A"/"B"/"C"	Please Call	-
Forest Hills "A"	140,000	110,000
Forest Hills "B"	Please Call	-
Forest Hills "C"	200,000	-
Makati Sports Club "A"	180,000	165,000
Makati Sports Club "B"	250,000	-
Manila Golf (Corporate)	-	Please Call
Manila Golf (Individual)	-	11,000,000
Manila Polo	2,250,000	2,150,000
Manila Southwoods "A"	350,000	310,000
Manila Southwoods "B"	Please Call	670,000
Manila Yacht Club	400,000	-
Metroclub "A"	120,000	90,000
Mimosa (Corporate)	-	450,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "A"	230,000	200,000
Mt. Malarayat Gold "C"	350,000	-
Orchard Golf Club "A"	180,000	150,000
Orchard Golf Club "B"	-	280,000
Orchard Golf Club "C"	430,000	-
Quezon City Sports Club	160,000	125,000
Rockwell	Please Call	-
Spa & Lodge	500,000	-
Sta. Elena "A"	1,200,000	1,100,000
Sta. Elena "B"	-	1,500,000
Tagaytay Country Club	350,000	320,000
Tagaytay Highlands	750,000	650,000
Tagaytay Midlands	680,000	630,000
Valle Verde (Individual)	100,000	85,000
Valle Verde (Corporate)	200,000	-
Valley Golf	200,000	190,000
Wack-Wack Golf Club	6,350,000	6,000,000

*PLAYING RIGHTS ALSO AVAILABLE

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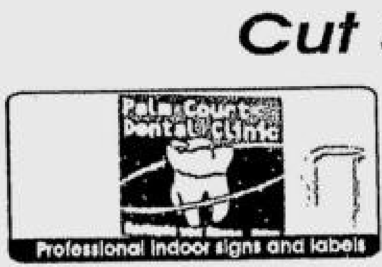
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Silverio snarl

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

CHEMPHIL CEO ANTONIO M. GARCIA has been snagged in the worsening feud between Bulacan Mayor/Sharp electronics partner Ricardo Silverio Sr. and his polo-playing son, Ricardo Jr.

Garcia, a former polo player himself, was named as a "co-conspirator" of Ricardo Jr. when the latter took over the Silverio Urdaneta Village residence while the patriarch and his second wife, Bulacan Rep. Lorna Silverio, were abroad.

Garcia had forwarded a text to a cellular phone number formerly used by the son, apparently not knowing that the unit, owned by a Silverio company, has now reverted to the patriarch after the son was removed from the family company.

The Garcia text was apparently a copy of the text he had sent to LBC Bank owner Carlos "Linggoy" Araneta, wherein Garcia claimed that the house on 21 Cruzadas St. belonged to a family corporation "of which Carding (the patriarch's nickname) does not own a single share."

"... (I)n the end Ricky (the son) as the controlling SH (shareholder) n administrator will prevail," the Garcia text continued. "Wen all is settled will tell ricky to reoffer the property to u," Garcia said, before signing off, "best rgds. tony"

Apparently unknown to Garcia, Araneta had counterchecked with Silverio Sr. the provenance of the Urdaneta house and that Araneta, unlike his cousin Marcos son-in-law Greggy Araneta who provided the security detail 'for the surreptitious takeover, was, in the words of Silverio Sr., "an innocent party."

Accompanied by his wife Dana and two children, the 57-year-old Silverio Jr. "simply rang the doorbell" of the Urdaneta house he grew up in and was allowed entry by their longtime maid, said Silverio Jr. friend Edvee Cruz, belying the armed takeover claim.

The hostage-taking claim—the three maids in the Urdaneta house were allegedly prevented from leaving thereafter—was a ploy, Cruz added, to get a Makati SWAT team to rush into the disputed house and eventually eject Silverio Jr. and the 10 security guards provided by Greggy Araneta.

Cruz and former Makati councilor Bong Daza, who accompanied Silverio Jr. during the takeover, were also included in the usurpation of property and two other complaints filed by the patriarch. According to Cruz, Silverio Jr. resented the fact that the house built by his departed mother has now been taken over by his stepmother, who used to be his father's secretary, while his father, being the San Rafael mayor, stays in Bulacan.

The 76-year-old patriarch, on the other hand, has blamed his son's unresolved medication issues for the latest in what he claimed was a long history of bizarre behavior.

Money-go-round

- PRICESMART plans to merge with Cost-U-Less, with Cost-U-Less as the surviving name of the unified stores, when the local PriceSmart shall have cleared its year-long disengagement with its former US parent.
- TAGAYTAY Highlands has appointed a female general manager, Lizette Villanueva, to manage the sprawling upland golf and country club after its founding GM, Nick Celdran, who recently had a heart bypass operation, decided to retire after 10 years in the service.

Heard through the grapevine

TAIPAN John Gokongwei Jr. would join the bidding for Equitable PCIBank if the SSS-GSIS-Romualdez shareholdings, totalling about 49 percent, is offered as one block.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

MRT project ...

From page B1

nent in the project.

"A lot of these MRT/LRT projects are able to recover the cost if you know how to do the real estate play. In other words, the developer also does housing, building, commercial and shopping centers." Neri said.

"Like what they're doing with MRT-7 (Edsa-Bulacan), they're sharing the profit with the government, because as you bring mass transport there, land values rise and if you're able to capture the opportunities, (the need for) government subsidy will be lower," he explained. *(See related story on page B7.)*

The MRT-8 East Rail project involves the procurement of 28 wide body three-car trains with a capacity of 1,005 passengers each.

Of the total project cost, 71 percent was intended to be the build-transfer component and the remaining 29 percent, the build-operate-transfer component.

Under government regulations, unsolicited BOT proposals are subject to a Swiss challenge or should be bid out to other interested investors but the original proponent has the right to improve its offer to match that of the winning bidder.

RP requesting ...

From page B1

gage in infrastructure- and environment-related projects.

The government is seeking $303 million for the Infrastructure Logistics Assistance Facility, and another $190 million for the Environmental Development Project.

Projects proposed to be financed under the Environment Development Project would include those related to sewerage-system enhancements and solid-waste management, Tan said.

The lining up of proposed projects for the 27th Yen Loan Package came after the Japanese government finally agreed to continue providing ODA to the Philippines.

The Japanese government earlier threatened to cut its ODA to the Philippines due to delays in the release of VAT refunds to Japanese contractors tapped to undertake infrastructure projects funded by ODAs from the Japanese government.

Under the Philippines' and Japanese government's ODA agreement, Japanese contractors and suppliers of projects funded by ODA from the Japanese government are exempted from paying taxes.

Stocks ...

From page B1

cant dollar-based investments flow into key sectors,"Cerdenia wrote in her weekly report.

Week-on-week, the benchmark index rose 14 points or 0.6 percent to 2,148.27.

AB Capital Securities wrote in a weekly report that the index was on the verge of trying to break the 2,172 resistance mark before political scandals again erupted.

"This should be a good indication that investors are slowly discounting the political distractions that occurred last year, and giving more emphasis on economic and financial concerns," AB Capital said.

News of mergers also bolstered shares of Banco de Oro, which touched an all time high of P38 a share. BDO has offered to merge with third largest Equitable PCI Bank, which also hit a 5-year high.

But AB Capital warned that a thorn in the market's side was the risk of higher oil prices.

"In fact, oil players are contemplating to raise pump prices anew as crude oil prices reached a 3-month high of $64.80 (last Friday). Since the Bangko Sentral's decision to raise rates last October, crude oil prices jumped 6 percent on concerns of winter temperatures in the US Northeast (largest heating oil market), declining crude stocks (build-up offset by higher projected 2.9 million barrels drawdown last week), and mild tensions in the Middle East," AB Capital wrote. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

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Can LGUs do it better?

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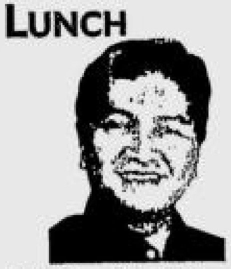

Cielito Habito

AMID ALL THE shortcomings, issues and problems with the national government and national government officials that we all like to attribute our country's troubles to, it is now not uncommon for people (including yours truly) to look to local governments as our hope. Such faith is inspired by the ever-growing number of "islands of excellence" in the management of development from the units of governance closest to the people. But unlike those of us who would prefer to further empower local government units (LGUs) to be the primary drivers of our development efforts, there are those who regard LGUs with cynicism and distrust because of certain prominent examples of mis-governance at the local level. They point to extravagant city and municipal halls as monuments to the fiscal irresponsibility of some LGUs.

Dependency syndrome

Critics fault the dependence of LGUs on national government resources via the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) as the primary source of their annual budgets. The situation varies widely. Cities like Makati and Quezon City, which can raise substantial local revenues, are indeed the exception, but actual LGU experience on IRA dependence varies widely. It depends, among other things, on inherent circumstances of the LGU, and on the proactiveness and political will of local officials. On the former, location (whether in the remote countryside or in the urban centers) is an obvious factor that determines how easily a local government can raise revenues on its own. There are also cases like that of Los Baños, Laguna, where the bulk of the territory is public land exempt from real property taxes, with the University of the Philippines owning the better part of the town's land area. And then there is Lanao del Sur, where provincial officials tell me that there is hardly any business to tax, for obvious reasons, and real property taxes are virtually unenforceable on recalcitrant landowners.

Hurdles

Many critics—including some international institutions—believe that the IRA mechanism itself has fostered the dependency syndrome among LGUs that they lament. To be fair, it must be recognized that much of the revenues raised by and for the national government originate from taxpayers, assets and economic activities at the local level, with some revenues actually collected through the LGUs themselves. These same LGUs are unhappy about how they must promptly remit collections to the national treasury, and then go through all sorts of hurdles to obtain release of their budgets from the national government.

And there are more hurdles. LGU officials also point out that obstacles to raising more local revenues often come from the national government itself. A persistent issue is the inability of LGUs to adequately tax branches of big businesses located within their jurisdiction, for lack of accurate information on these establishments' gross sales made within the locality. The LGUs hosting the headquarters of such companies (especially Makati) may be getting an undue share of the revenues from local business taxes due, at the expense of the LGUs where the firm's branches generate their actual business. Their request for the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) to share the information needed to correct this has gone unheeded because of a gray area in the law on tax confidentiality. This difficulty need not be insurmountable, but has yet to be resolved.

LGU forums

In pursuit of stronger local fiscal management, a series of policy discussions dubbed "Responsibilities and Resources: LGUs Can Do It Better," is being conducted with municipal mayors on Jan. 20, city mayors on Jan. 24, and provincial governors on Feb. 3. The forum outcome will guide reform initiatives of the Ateneo-led Economic Policy Reform and Advocacy (Epra) program toward asserting the crucial role of LGUs as prime movers for national development.

The forums are premised on the conviction that LGUs can indeed do it better: better than before, and better than the national government can. But we need to identify the necessary interventions to provide them the right incentives, capabilities, and policy environment to bring out their best.

'Romancing the Gifted'

Those of us who spent some of the most critical years of our lives under the motherly tutelage of Dra. Cleofe Bacungan ("Drabacu" or "Drabacs" as we affectionately called her), director of the Philippine Science High School for almost two decades, will be pleased to know that the book honoring her is finally out. "Romancing the Gifted" is more than a tribute by PSHS alumni to a woman who dedicated not just her career, but her very life to thousands of gifted youth in the country's acknowledged premier high school. It is also a historical account, a window into the backgrounds of many prominent Filipinos produced by PSHS, and at the very least, a sentimental record of adolescent reminiscences that should bring alumni on a pleasant journey back in time.

PSHS alumni are invited to the book's launch on Jan. 21 at 8:30 a.m. at the school premises. Purchase of the book will help the PSHS Foundation continue assisting the school in ensuring a continuing crop of young Filipino leaders who will shape the country's future for generations to come. Call the PSHS Foundation office at 924-0655 for orders or inquiries.

Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

Expected farm yield seen to bring down RP rice imports in 2006

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE HIGH FARM YIELD EXPECTED IN THE first semester may allow the government to cut the country's rice imports, which last year reached over 1.67 million metric tons.

The country's rice production in the first semester of 2006 may reach a total 6.39 million metric tons—higher by 6 percent than the yield posted in the same period last year, Department of Agriculture Secretary Domingo F. Panganiban said.

According to Panganiban, additional areas will again be converted to hybrid rice production in the next cropping season.

Panganiban, in an interview on Friday, said he was expecting an additional 30,000 to 40,000 hectares to be planted with hybrid rice seeds.

The higher yielding rice seeds are expected to produce about 4 to 7 tons per hectare.

The inter-agency Rice and Corn Committee sets the level of imports—which for this year has been pegged at 1.8 million MT—for the National Food Authority.

But Panganiban said the NFA would not have to bring in that amount of rice this year.

"The importation may be lower than what has been expected," he said.

Under the GMA rice program, the DA hopes to weed out perennial supply problems and save on costly rice importation.

Rice imports now range from $290 to $310 per metric ton. If the NFA were to use up its quota and import the entire 1.8 million metric tons allotted for this year, it would cost the national government over P29 billion, based on the P54:$1 exchange rate.

The NFA will be importing some 350,000 metric tons of rice in the first semester. The imported rice will be part of the country's rice inventory for 2006.

According to officials, the country usually imports in the second quarter of each year the bulk of its rice requirement for use in the third quarter—the lean season for local harvests.

The NFA has the sole authority to import the commodity.

For the rest of the year, the planting of hybrid varieties will be downsized to 29 provinces, following a technical review that would determine the areas with the highest yield potential.

To encourage farmers to shift to hybrid rice seeds, the DA will provide a P1,300 seed subsidy and various forms of technical assistance, such as techno-demo farms and fertilizer discounts.

DOT

$1.9-B pe

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE GOVERNMENT eco
Universal LRT Corp., the
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The Cabinet-level Inve
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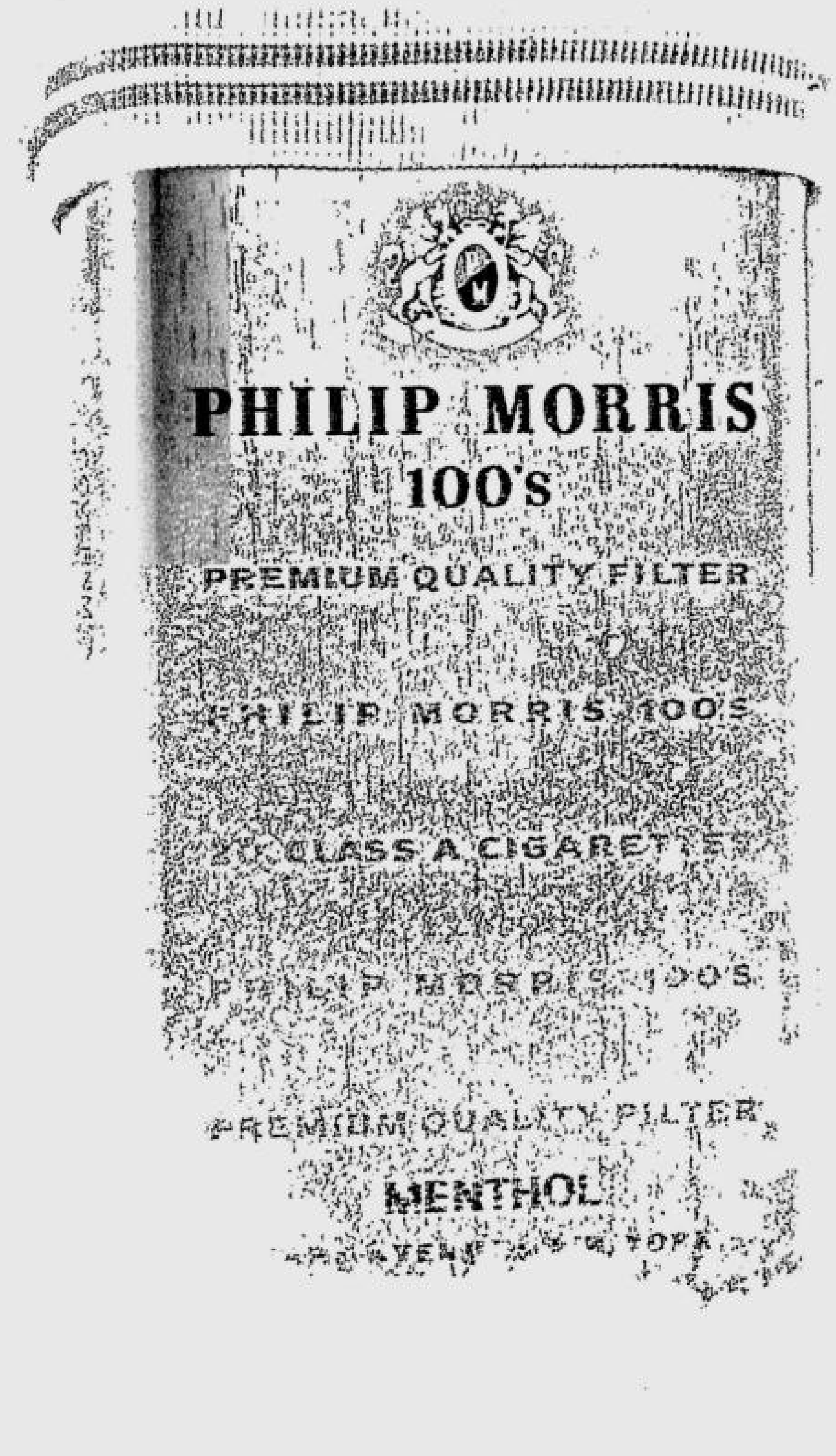

Government Warnin
is dangerous

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wants ICC to break $4-B MRT 7 impasse

rformance bond, cap on rate of return still the main issues

omic team is asking
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- Arroyo is expected

Two outstanding issues have to be resolved. One is whether to allow the MRT 7 consortium to exceed the 11.9 percent rate of return ceiling that the National Economic and Development Authority had set. The other is the $1.9-billion performance bond.

The Department of Transportation and Communication wanted the ICC to allow Universal LRT to go beyond the 11.9 percent return that will arise from cost efficiency, not tariff increases, but only up to 14 percent.

The excess revenue must be shared equally by the consortium and the government and any return beyond 14 percent should accrue strictly to the government, said Transport Assistant Secretary Roberto Castanares.

The DOTC also proposed the setting of the performance bond at 10 percent of the rail and real estate construction cost, which is only $390 million. This, Castanares said, was the standard requirement in government projects.

The DOTC suggested that the the performance bond issue be among the parameters of the Swiss challenge for the project, which is required for projects arising from unsolicited proposals.

"Let us test the market such that whoever could come up with the performance bond better than the proponent's offer and closest to the $1.899 billion required by the ICC gets the project," Castanares said.

This way, he said the government could find out if its performance bond requirement was realistic.

"If the ICC would insist on its condition, then no BOT project would push through and therefore the agenda of the President insofar as decongesting Metro Manila would not be realized," said the transport official.

The MRT 7 project comes with a real estate component where the consortium is committing to construct 2,500 residential units and 300 office units each year on a 174-hectare area in Bulacan.

To improve accessibility with other modes of transport, the consortium will construct a 22-km road in Bulacan and a 20-ha bus and train depot also in Bulacan.

The SM Group owns 60 percent of MRT-7's real estate venture and 25 percent of the railway project. The Universal LRT consortium is composed of Siemens, Alstom, China Railway 18, EEI Corp. of the Yuchengcos and Merlin Capital of the Tong family.

"We suggest that with increased efficiency, good performance and a higher level of ridership within the capacity provided under our agreement, our investors be given the chance to exceed the projected rate of return," said Levin, president of Universal LRT.

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Defensor's loose ends at DENR

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

AS SECRETARY Michael Defensor moves from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to Malacañang, he leaves behind some loose ends. Whoever takes his place at the department has some housecleaning chores ahead of him.

On April 6, 2005, Defensor signed Administrative Order No. 2005-06. The subject: Guidelines for the Institution of a System of Mandatory Environmental Insurance Coverage.

Virtually every business that owns, trades in, and develops private or public land is exposed to a growing risk of legal action. Increasing public awareness and concern over pollution issues, an ever-growing list of potentially hazardous materials, and unexpected catastrophes leave companies facing huge clean-up costs and liabilities arising out of bodily injury and damage to other people's property. The AO is designed to address these concerns.

The AO requires all ongoing activities/projects and applications for an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) and/or Certificate of Non-Coverage (CNC) to be covered by an environmental performance bond and Pollution, Impairment and Clean-Up Liability Insurance.

The performance bond is commonly required of a contractor. The bond guarantees that the contractor will finish the project in accordance with the approved plans and specifications. If the government owns the project, the performance bond, if I am not mistaken, has to be issued by the GSIS, in accordance with a Marcos decree.

The insurance policy—a highly specialized, and recently designed policy not yet marketable in this country—answers for all claims arising from damage to the environment, bodily injury and property damage. This policy would have covered the environmental damage arising from the accident at the Marcopper mines in Marinduque some years back.

But the AO cannot be implemented because another set of guidelines has yet to be issued. This set should specify, among other things, the amount of the performance bond (this is usually expressed as a percentage of the contract value), and the limits of liability of the insurance policy. Almost a year after the AO was signed, the implementing rules and regulations are still being hammered out.

Then there is the problem of what policy form is to be used. Last June, a company, heading a consortium, submitted a form for the approval of the Insurance Commission. This form seems to be a British version. There is also an American version that has yet to be submitted to the commission. Faced with an insurance policy it has never seen before, the commission is understandably taking its time acting on the form.

In its present wording, the AO has some provisions I find quite disturbing. First, all claims against the policy shall be paid in escrow to the DENR. Then, the DENR will decide how the money will ultimately be disbursed.

A claim can run into tens of millions of pesos. It seems to me it is not safe for a government agency to hold on to such a large sum without any rules.

I can accept this provision if the claim arises out of, say, the pollution of a river where it is not easy to determine who is the eventual beneficiary. But, if the claim arises out of damage to private property or injury to specific persons, the claim should be paid straight to the claimants.

More disturbing is the provision saying that the insurance policy must be issued by an insurance company duly accredited with the DENR. Accreditation is the job of the Insurance Commission, not the DENR.

An accreditation scheme such as the one prescribed under the AO is always meant to allow the accredited company to corner or monopolize the business. Accreditation is like an exclusive franchise. This inevitably results in high premium costs and poor service to the insuring public.

If the insurance company is duly licensed by the Insurance Commission and is authorized to issue the insurance policy, the DENR should accept the company and the policy.

Most important of all, DENR should realize that if a person is smart enough to undertake a contract that needs an Environmental Compliance Certificate, he should be smart enough to buy the right insurance policy from the right company at the right price.

At any rate, these two provisions alone make the AO a recipe for graft and corruption.

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Video, mobile devices get married at technology show

By Leo Magno

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA—IN this city where snap weddings occur at night and dissolve as soon as the bride's hangover fades in the morning, a marriage of technologies has occurred.

At the 2006 International Consumer Electronics Show, a consumer technology trade show and geekfest with more than 150,000 attendees and 2,500 exhibitors sprawled on space the size of 69 football fields, mobile gadgets and video have tied the knot. Whereas before, mobile phones ruled CES, this year mobile video was king.

MANUFACTURERS at the CES say mobile TV is no longer future technology. You can go to a retail store in the US and buy a device with video services today.

Live demos of video being viewed from portable devices took center stage at this year's CES. A cafeteria of gadgets and video delivery mechanisms were showcased, be it via streaming video to cellular phones, via mobile broadcast over 3G or as movie files saved to tiny devices.

American mobile phone provider Sprint and Sanyo, for instance, have tied up to deliver Mobile ESPN on the cell phone. Its maiden broadcast will feature the Superbowl on February 5. For its part, RCA introduced the $399 Lyra X3000 portable video device that can transfer movies and TV shows directly from the TV itself. It has a 3.6-inch screen and a 20-gigabyte hard drive good for about 40 movies.

Why would people want to watch a show on such tiny screens when people are buying big projection or plasma TVs? It's because mobile broadcast is a totally new experience, said NBC Mobile's Beth O'Connell.

"This is customized content," she said. "It's not just TV ripped off and then you put it on the cell phone. At 18 frames per second (TV is at 33 frames per second) and rare buffering, this is a really good experience."

Live portable TV provider MobiTV is doing the same thing on handhelds.

"We've taken the cable and satellite business models and put that on the cellular phone," said MobiTV chief marketing officer Dave Whetstone. "Increasingly, the cable TV industry is looking at the consumer electronics industry as a partner."

Pat Esser, executive vice president and

VIDEO/ B9

THE SONY Ericsson W810 comes with a 512Mb removable Memory Stick, upgradeable to 2Gb

Sony Ericsson launches new Walkman phone

SONY ERICSSON IS GOING AFTER mobile music lovers and asking them to lend their ears.

The company introduced the latest of its Walkman phones, the Sony Ericsson W810, plus two Walkman-branded music accessories at the 2006 International Consumer Electronics Show.

"Sony Ericsson's Walkman phones are redefining how consumers listen and enjoy music, and the W810 strengthens our music phone line-up with the addition of dedicated music buttons on the front of the phone and an expanded choice of how users upload music to the phone," said Miles Flint, president of Sony Ericsson.

Unveiled at the CES was the Sony Ericsson W810, a Quad-band EDGE phone (850/900/1800/1900 MHz) that enables users to transfer their legacy CD collection or access operator music download services, while staying connected anywhere in the world.

The new Walkman phone model in Satin Black with orange trim comes with a 512Mb removable Memory Stick, which can be upgraded to 2Gb currently available in retail outlets. This allows a wealth of music tracks, photos, video and other multimedia files to be stored on the phone.

The W810 supports industry standard MP3 and AAC music file formats and comes complete with HPM-70 stereo headphones which feature a standard 3.5 mm headphone jack for personal customization.

Consumers can easily load music to the phone; either uploading their legacy CD collection onto the W810 from a PC via USB 2.0 using the provided Disc2Phone music management software, or by purchasing new music from operator specific over-the-air download services. This enclosed PC software makes it easy to sort, browse and transfer files on the 512 Mb Memory Stick PRO Duo, which provides capacity for approximately 150 music tracks—the equivalent of around 15 full length CDs.

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Intel: Multi-taskers to use multi-core chips

By Leo Magno

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA—THE TECHnology industry is seeing the rise of digital multi-taskers and it is but natural for technology companies to cater to this need, according to Intel Corp. President and CEO Paul Otellini.

At the 2006 International Consumer Electronics Show, Otellini said computer users are doing a number of things all at the same time, whether web browsing, playing music, playing games or working on an application.

"We are multi-tasking creatures, and the younger you are, the more so this is true," he said.

This, he said, demands more performance while at the same time users are requiring that their devices become more and more mobile. Paradoxically, such a demand also requires lower power consumption from that high-performance mobile device.

"How do we deliver against that paradox? Intel has made a massive shift in processor development from focusing on generating more and more gigahertz or clock speed per generation of chips to the development of multi-core processors," Otellini said.

These processors, he said, deliver more horsepower and performance for the digital media and multi-tasking operations that people are getting used to.

"At the same time, this shifts the power curve, delivers less heat, improves battery life and enables manufacturers to create smaller devices."

Intel introduced multi-core processor for desktops and servers last year, but has not been able to do that for mobile devices such as notebook computers. At the CES, Intel introduced the Centrino Core Duo, which the company claims is 68 percent faster and consumes 28 percent less power for an extra hour of battery life and better wi-fi performance. This is now positioned as a multi-core processor for notebook computers.

Intel also showed an array of products from Sony, Dell, Fujitsu, Lenovo, LG, Samsung and other notebook manufacturers using the Centrino Core Duo. One notebook even had a DVB (digital video broadcasting) receiver which enabled it to pick up TV signals for live mobile viewing from the notebook. The notebooks were then subjected to multiple tasks. A notebook with a single core processor which was subjected to the same tasks froze because it could not handle the processing required.

"The Centrino Duo platform we believe is the processor for the next era of multi-tasking, mobile computing," Otellini said. "It's optimized for low power, performance and digital entertainment. Ever since 1993 when the Pentium was introduced, it has revolutionized computing. Core Duo is our first premium brand since the Pentium, but it is three times smaller at just about the size of a dime. It's a hundred times more powerful than the first Pentium."

Otellini said the Core Duo will have a fast uptake in the market. It took Intel one year to ship the one millionth Pentium processor, but Otellini said it will take them only three weeks to ship the millionth Core Duo.

Beyond the notebook computer, Intel will in the future ship Core Duo chips for smaller handheld devices like personal digital assistants and cell phones. This, Otellini said, "will blur the differences between desktop, mobile and consumer electronic devices."

Group dares telcos to make SMS promos permanent

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP TXTPower is challenging mobile telecommunications providers to make their SMS and call rate promos permanent and standard.

In a statement, TXTPower convenor Trixie Concepcion argued that the telecommunications providers have been constantly coming up with promos that lower the cost of text messaging and phone calls, which showed that the companies were still earning from the promos.

Concepcion cited Smart Communications' Flat Rate, Globe Telecom's Celebrate and Sun Cellular's Unlimited. The promo mechanics varied from a flat rate of P15 per three minutes of phone calls, 10 centavos per minute charging, to unlimited call or text use for a 12-hour period.

"These telcos have shown consumers that cheap calls and text is possible and in fact profitable for the companies," Concepcion said.

Conception added that the promo rates could further help Filipinos by lowering telecommunications costs.

She also said that the telecommunications companies can also optimize the use of their network infrastructure through their promos.

She is calling for the National Telecommunications Commission to require the providers to lower their rates.

"It is high time that they act to put the interests of these consumers over the large rate of profit these telcos are enjoying amid the rising cost of almost all services and goods needed by the consuming public."

There had been previous proposals from Congress to lower the rates of telecommunications cost. Several congressional bills were consolidated to become one proposal that pushed for a six-second billing system for mobile phones.

The proposal is currently being reviewed by the committee on information and communications in Congress.

Video, mobile devices get married . . .

From page B8

chief operating officer of American cable service provider Cox Communications, agreed. He added, however, that the video-mobile marriage was facilitated by the need to push video products to the retail market, outside cable's comfort zone of offering services straight to homes.

"Millions and millions of consumer electronics devices are being offered by retailers," said Esser. "It's our responsibility to make sure that the cable content users get in their homes can also be placed into their mobile devices. At the end of the day, we want our consumers to go to retail stores and not just get our content at their homes. If you want a cell phone with our cable content, you go to a retail store. Having our products at retail would be a competitive advantage."

MobiTV's Whetstone said the biggest challenge facing mobile video is lack of awareness that the technology is already available.

"People think this is still future technology," he said. "They don't realize that you can go straight to a retailer and get it, so the biggest challenge is (lack of) awareness."

The impending success of the video-mobile marriage is partly attributed to the decline of the film industry. Mobile video is gaining steam as movie ticket sales continue to plummet. Estimates from Nielsen EDI peg 2005 ticket sales at $8.8 billion, down 4.2 percent from $9.2 billion recorded in 2004. Movie theater attendance is also dropping. About 1.4 billion movie tickets were sold in the US last year, an 8.5-percent decrease from 1.53 billion tickets sold in 2004.

Hollywood star Tom Hanks who spoke at the CES acknowledged this when asked about how movies on mobile devices would affect the film industry.

"The audience will be pulling content toward them," said Hanks. "The box office will always have its ups and downs. I do shoulder some of the responsibility for having low movie ticket sales last year because frankly, there was no Tommy Hanks film last year."

Director Ron Howard who was also at CES had another view.

"Nothing's going to replace the great social experience of going out with friends or family and watching a movie on the big screen," said Howard.

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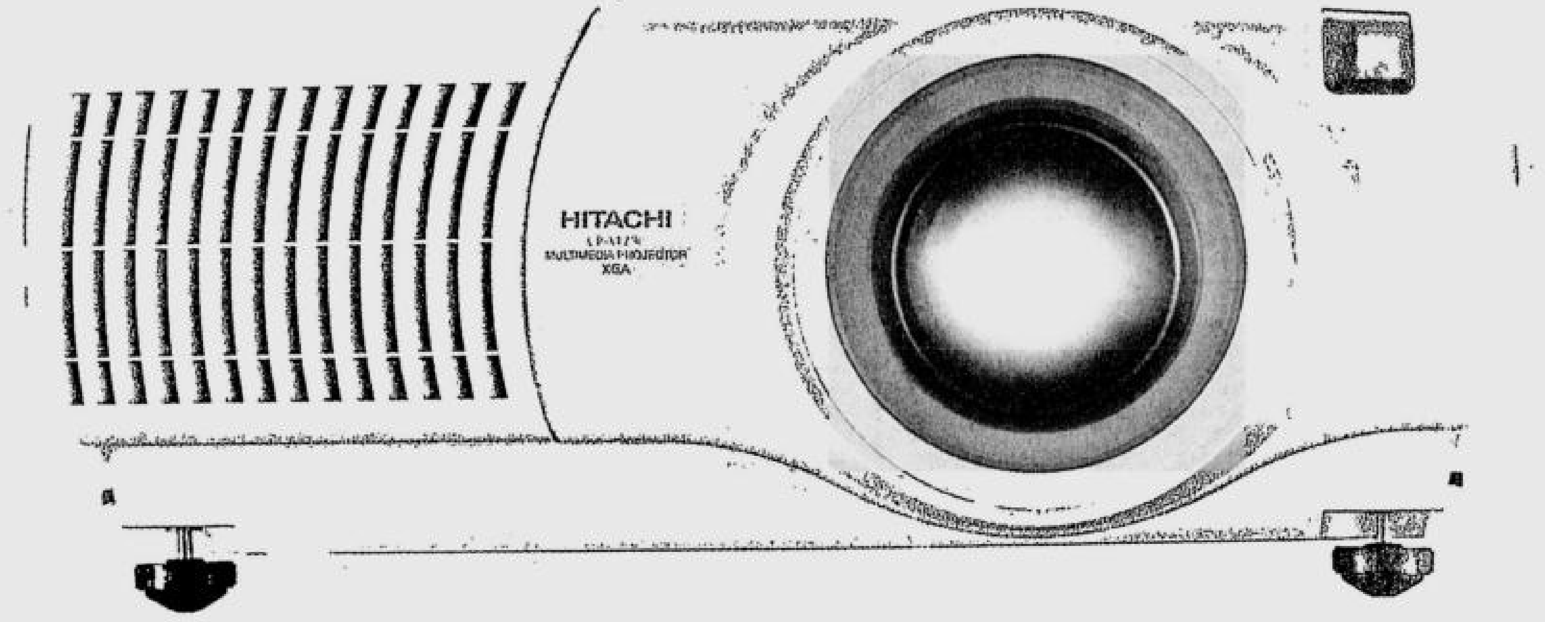

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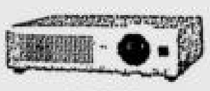
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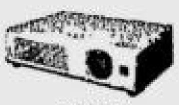
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The Bidding Committee of Manila Golf and Country Club, Inc., hereby announces the auction sale of the following described property:

(a) Two (2) individual proprietary membership certificates.
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The auction sale will be held at the Board Room, Manila Golf and Country Club, Inc., Harvard Road, Forbes Park, Makati City on January 24 and 31, 2006 at 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

The rules and regulations for the auction sale and bid forms may be obtained from the office of the Club's General Manager.

CESAR C. CRUZ
Chairman, Bidding Committee

(PDI–January 16, 2006)

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INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY AND BID

1. The **PHILIPPINE RECLAMATION AUTHORITY** (formerly Public Estates Authority) is inviting all interested parties to prequalify and bid for the lease of twelve (12) pre-selected sites for outdoor billboard advertising along the landstrip of Coastal Road from Barangay Tambo, Parañaque to Barangay Ilaya, Las Piñas City.
2. Qualified Bidders
   a. Any Filipino citizen, of legal age, and
   b. Any partnership, association or corporation, public or private of which at least 70% of the capital stock or of any interest in said capital stock belongs wholly to citizens of the Philippines and which is organized and constituted under the laws of the Philippines.
3. Interested qualified parties may obtain the Terms of Reference and Bid Documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of THREE THOUSAND PESOS (P3,000.00) in cash or Manager's/Cashier's check starting **December 22, 2005** until **January 24, 2006** from **9:00 AM to 5:00 PM** at the Marketing Department, 7th Floor Legaspi Towers 200, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City.
4. The first pre-bid conference is scheduled on **January 18, 2006** at **2:00 PM** at the PRA Conference Room, 8th Floor, Legaspi Towers 200, Paseo de Roxas, Makati City.
5. Required pre-qualification documents and duly accomplished Bid Documents prescribed in the Terms of Reference shall be submitted to the PRA Real Estates Bids and Awards Committee (PREBAC) on **January 25, 2006** on or before **1:00 PM.** Public opening of bids shall follow at **1:30 PM** of the same day.
6. For further information, inquiries may be made to the Marketing Department in the above address at telephone numbers 817-4711 to 13 (trunk line) and 813-7104 (direct line)

(Sgd.) **TEODORICO C. TAGUINOD**
General Manager/CEO

(PDI–Dec. 16, 19, 20, 2005; Jan. 5, 10 & 16, 2006)

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The HAGONOY WATER DISTRICT, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the hereunder project.

Name of Project	HWD 3 Storey Commercial Building with Roofdeck
Brief Description	Commercial Spaces for 2 floors & office with escalator
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	Php 23,500,000.00
Contract Duration	240 Days

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License applicable to the contract, have completed a similar contract with the value at least 50% of the ABC and have key personnel and equipment (listed in the Eligibility Forms) available for the prosecution of the contract. The BAC will use non discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of bids. The BAC will conduct post qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, bid Security, Performance Security, Pre Bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

BAC activities	Schedule
1. Submission of Letters of Intent (LOI) and Application for Eligibility	Up to Jan. 30, 2006 not later than 5 p.m.
2. Submission of Eligibility Requirements	February 1, 2006
3. Results of Eligibility Check & shortlisting	February 3, 2006
4. Issuance of Bid Documents	February 6, 2006
5. Pre bid Conference	February 13, 2006
6. Receipt and Opening of Bids	February 17, 2006

The BAC will issue to prospective bidders Eligibility Forms at the Hagonoy Water District Main Office at Hagonoy, Bulacan upon submission of LOI and upon payment of a non refundable amount of Php 1,000.00 to Hagonoy Water District Cashier. Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC at the said address. They may also obtain the Notice of Eligibility from the BAC at the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to bidders declared by BAC to be eligible for the bidding upon payment of non refundable amount of Php 10,000.00 to Hagonoy Water District Cashier. The bidders may submit their bids and transact business with the BAC Chairman MR. ALBERTO S. LOPEZ.

The Hagonoy Water District assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

(Sgd.) ENGR. CELESTINO S. VENGCO
GENERAL MANAGER

(PDI – January 16 & 23, 2006)

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MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2006

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EMMANUEL "NEL" L. UNSON

Peacefully joined our Lord
on January 14, 2006 at the age of 45.

He is survived by his wife **Ruth**; and children **Marah** and **Samme**; his parents **Tony** and **Nita**; brothers and sisters **Monching**, **Eddie**, **Amy** and **Lucille**.

His remains lie in state at the Mortuary of Sta. Maria della Strada, Katipunan Ave. cor. Pansol, Quezon City. Interment will be on Wednesday, January 18, 2006 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City, after the 9:00 A.M. Mass.

*** Please omit flowers. Please include him in your prayers.**

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."

— 2 Corinthians 5:8

"Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6

In Loving Memory of

JUDGE RENO R. GONZALES, SR. (Ret.)

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on his
1st Death Anniversary

Surviving wife Lourdes and children: Rene and Gilda, Rowena and Eric Sarina Rosa and Joey, Rey and Alexia, Reno, Jr. and Ma. Louisa Valdemar and Elsa, Tina Lou, and all his grandchildren extend their appreciation and thanks to all relatives and friends who offered prayers and gave their support to the family at their time of bereavement.

Message of Thanks

The bereaved family **LYDIA TAN SY**; children **JEANETTE** and **JACINTO KEH**, **JUDY** and **EPISON TAN**, **JOSEPHINE** and **JEFFREY ONG**, **JERRY** and **RUMIKO SY**, **JOANAHAN SY**, **JAMES** and **SALLY SY** & grandchildren and relatives of the late

SY GUIOK (LUIS)

who joined his Creator
on January 5, 2006

wish to convey their heartfelt gratitude to all those who paid their last respect and grieved with them, offered masses and prayers, sent flowers, messages of sympathy, kept vigil, were present at the Necrological Services, Novena Masses, funeral rites and who in various generous ways gave them comfort at the time of their great loss and sorrow.

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CLASSIFIEDS

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.
GUAGUA, PAMPANGA

January 9, 2006

INVITATION TO BID

PAMPANGA II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (PELCO II) WITH OFFICE ADDRESS IN SAN ROQUE, GUAGUA, PAMPANGA IS PRESENTLY IN NEED OF FORTY (40) STRONG SECURITY GUARDS FROM A LICENSED SECURITY AGENCY.

You are therefore invited to submit your bids/proposals to the PBAC and participate in a sealed bidding on January 26, 2006 (Thursday), 11:00 A.M. at PELCO II Board Room, San Roque, Guagua, Pampanga wherein your bid will be opened in your presence or that of your representatives. Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents shall not be accepted.

REQUEST FURTHER TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SEALED BIDS/PROPOSALS ASIDE FROM THE BID AMOUNT, **THE TERMS OF PAYMENT, LICENSE CERTIFICATE, NUMBER OF SECURITY FORCE & COMPANY'S PROFILE. THESE REQUIREMENTS ARE VERY VITAL IN OUR PBAC EVALUATION PURPOSES.** THE BID BOND IS EITHER IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TWO AND ONE HALF PERCENT (2.5%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE OR SURETY BOND (W/ O.R.) EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE. ALL BIDDERS ARE REQUESTED TO BE AT PELCO II BOARD ROOM AT EXACTLY 11:00 A.M. FOR FURTHER CLARIFICATION PLEASE CONTACT OR VISIT PBAC CHAIRPERSON MS. ANA LEA N. NARCISO, TEL. NO. (045) 900-0611 OR MR. NEIL S. ISIP (045) 901-0864 TO 65.

LATE SUBMISSION OF BIDS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. THE PBAC HAS THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS, WAIVE ANY INFORMALITY IN THE PROPOSAL RECEIVED AND TO ACCEPT SUCH MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE COOPERATIVE.

PLEASE BE INFORMED FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF YOUR COMPANY AT PELCO II OFFICE. ACCREDITATION FEE IS ONE THOUSAND PESOS (P1,000.00). ASIDE FROM THE ACCREDITATION FEE, THE PBAC WILL BE CHARGING ALL BIDDERS ONE THOUSAND PESOS (P1,000.00) FOR THE BID DOCUMENTS.

(Sgd.) **ANA LEA N. NARCISO**
PBAC Chairperson

(PDI-Jan. 15 & 16, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
SEC Building, EDSA, Greenhills
Mandaluyong City
Corporation Finance Department

IN THE MATTER OF THE
PRUDENTIALIFE FIXED INCOME
FUND, INC. : Registration of Securities
x-----------------------------x

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that on January 4, 2006, a registration statement was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission for and on behalf of **PRUDENTIALIFE FIXED INCOME FUND, INC.** for the registration of its Three Hundred Million (300,000,000) common shares with the par value of One Peso (P1.00) per share or an aggregate par value of Three Hundred Million Pesos (P300,000,000.00). As of December 29, 2005, its Net Asset Value Per Share is P1.1066.

According to the papers/documents presented, the following persons are the officers/directors of the corporations:

NAME	POSITION
Jose Alberto T. Alba	Chairman/Director
Atty. Raymund P. Navarro	President/Director
Jose L. Santos	Director
Francisco A. Alba	Director
Paul Joseph M. Garcia	Independent Director
Antonio P. Gatmaitan	Director
Francisco T. Alba, Jr.	Director
Lyndon L. Lukban	Treasurer/Director
Atty. Ceferino A. Patino	Corp. Secretary/Director

The registration statement and other papers/documents attached thereto are open to inspection by interested parties during business hours and copies thereof, photostatic or otherwise shall be furnished to every party at such reasonable fees as the Commission may prescribe.

(Sgd.) **JUSTINA F. CALLANGAN**
Director

(PDI–Jan. 16 & 23, 2006)

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INVITATION TO BID

The Insurance Commission (IC) invites eligible bidders to submit bids for the purchase of the 40 Laptop Computer. Allotted budget is Ps 3,200,000.00.

A complete set of Bid Documents can be acquired upon submission of a written application and upon payment of non-refundable fee of **TWO THOUSAND PESOS (Ps 2,000.00)** from January 16-29, 2006. A pre-bid conference will be held on January 30, 2006 at 10:00 AM.

Bid proposal must be submitted in two (2) sealed envelopes and labeled as follows:

A. Eligibility Check Envelope containing:

1. Legal Documents;
2. Technical Documents;
3. Financial Documents; and
4. Other documents such as valid joint venture agreement, in case of a joint venture; and letter authorizing the BAC or its duly authorized representative to verify any or all of the documents submitted for eligibility check.

B. Technical and Financial Proposal Envelope

Eligibility check screening as well as the preliminary examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualifications of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to the Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Evaluation on Bids, Post qualifications and award of contract shall be governed by the provisions of RA 1984 and its implementing rules and regulations and other applicable government rules and regulations.

Deadline of submission of sealed bids shall not be later than 12:00 noon on February 13, 2006 and bids shall be opened at 2:00 PM of the same date at the Function Room, Insurance Commission, 1071 United Nations Avenue.

For inquiries, please contact Ms. Nancy V. Camaliga/Ariel S. Sim at Telephone Nos. 525-7521 and 404-1664 respectively.

IC assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate an indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

IC reserves the rights to reject any or all bids, waive any minor defects therein and accept the offer most advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) **PAMELA F. PITAS**
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

Noted By:

(Sgd.) **EVANGELINE CRISOSTOMO-ESCOBILLO**
Insurance Commissioner

(PDI - January 16 & 23, 2006)

NFA Davao del Sur delivers rice in Sarangani Island

AT LEAST 897 GRADE 1 PUPILS FROM 16 schools of the island municipality of Sarangani received rice from the National Food Authority under the Food-for-School Program II launched at the Mabila Central Elementary School. Dubbed as "Bigas para sa Mag-aaral at Pamilya", the program is being jointly undertaken by the NFA and the Department of Education (DepEd) to keep schoolchildren from 5th class municipalities in school by providing them with a kilogram of rice for every day they go to school. Recently, NFA Davao del Sur undertook the initial delivery of 15,249 kilograms of well-milled rice (WMR) equivalent to 17 school days to Sarangani Island. The island is classified as a 5th class municipality located at the tip of the province with a population of 18,391 consisting mainly of the Sangil tribes, B'la-ans, Cebuano-speaking immigrants and Maroris who came from the nearby Marori Island of Indonesia. For more information on NFA programs, the public may send their inquiries via the Text NFA Program through mobile number 0917-6210927.

Republic of the Philippines
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
Ninth Judicial Region
Branch 12
Zamboanga City

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION FOR REHABILITATION OF
NONITO J. BERNARDO DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

SPECIAL CASE NO. 5384

NONITO J. BERNARDO
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Petitioner
x-------------------------------------x

STAY ORDER

BEFORE this Court is a verified petition for corporate rehabilitation with prayer for a stay order filed by the above-named petitioner corporation on December 21, 2005.

Briefly, the petitioner corporation alleges that its income drastically declined during the last four years compared to its capacity during the 1990's attributed to several economic factors such as severe business conditions experienced by them from 1998 to 2003 which lead to further decrease in their income during the years 2003 to 2004 which aggravated its worsening financial situation to the extend that it already failed to service its outstanding loans which as of the filing of their petition already amounted to a total of P89,116,759.82 which it proposes to reduce by fifty percent (50%) within the first two (2) years of rehabilitation and to fully service their remaining indebtedness starting on the fifth and last year thereof.

A careful examination of the petition shows that the same substantially conforms to the provision of Section 2, Rule 4 of the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation and appears to be sufficient in form and substance.

IN VIEW THEREOF, this Court hereby issues a Stay Order, pursuant to Section 6, Rule 4 of the above-cited Rules and hereby orders the following:

1.) Appointing Victor Augustus B. Filamor as rehabilitation receiver who shall be considered as an officer of the court and who shall have the powers, duties and functions as provided in Section 14, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules. The rehabilitation receiver must post a bond of P1,000,000.00, Philippine Currency, before exercising his powers, duties and functions and must take his oath, as provided for under Section 15, Rule 4 of the aforecited Rules. The petitioner corporation is directed to immediately serve a copy of this Stay Order upon the rehabilitation receiver, Victor Augustus B. Filamor, who shall manifest his acceptance or no-acceptance of his appointment not later than five (5) days from his receipt of the same.
2.) Suspending and/or staying enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether such enforcement is by court action or not, against the petitioner corporation, and its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the petitioner corporation including the staying of all proceedings for collection filed against the petitioner corporation, and the staying of the enforcement/implementation of applications for extra-judicial foreclosure sales and actual foreclosure sales, if any, against the real and personal properties of the petitioner corporation;
3.) Prohibiting the petitioner corporation from selling, encumbering, transferring or disposing in any manner, any of its properties except in the ordinary course of business;
4.) Prohibiting the petitioner corporation from making any payments of its liabilities outstanding as of the date of the filing of this petition which was on December 21, 2005.
5.) Prohibiting the suppliers of the petitioners corporation from withholding supply of goods and services in the ordinary course of business for as long as the petitioner corporation makes payments for the services and goods supplied after the issuance of this Stay Order;
6.) Directing the petitioner corporation to pay in full all administrative expenses incurred after the issuance of this Stay Order;

The initial hearing on this petition is set before this Court on January 25, 2006, (Wednesday) at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon. All creditors and other interested parties including the Securities and Exchange Commission are hereby directed to file with this Court and serve upon the petitioner corporation, a verified comment and/or opposition to the herein petition attaching thereto the supporting documents and sworn statements thereto, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing as set forth above, and they are put on notice that their failure to do so will bar them from participating during the proceedings before this Court. All creditors and interested parties are further directed to secure from this Court, copies of the petition with all its annexes within such time as to enable them to file their verified comment and/or opposition thereto and to prepare them for the initial hearing and to attain this purpose, the petitioner corporation is hereby ordered to file with this Court initially, twenty (20) additional copies of the petition and all its annexes within ten (10) days from receipt of this Stay Order.

The petitioner corporation is hereby directed to caused the publication of this Stay Order at the business section of the Philippine Star, The Daily Inquirer and one other newspaper of national and general circulation in the Philippines considering the possible presence of other creditors and interested parties, once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks, with the last publication effected at least seven (7) days prior to the date set for the initial hearing as set forth above, at the sole expense of the petitioner corporation.

Atty. Nimfa Padao, the Branch Clerk of Court, is ordered to see to it that the Court's Process Server shall immediately serve copies of this Stay Order upon the following persons, to wit:

1. Nonito J. Bernardo - (the authorized representative of the petitioner corporation) c/o Nonito J. Bernardo Development Corporation, Ayala Barangay, Zamboanga City
2. Atty. Teodoro Jose S. Matta and Atty. Maria Katrina Bote-Veguillas - (petitioner corporation's lead counsels) c/o Dela Vega Matta Bote-Veguillas & Associates Law Offices, G/F One Primrose Place, 663 Boni Avenue Plainview, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila
3. Atty. Susan N. de los Reyes - (co-counsel for petitioner corporation) c/o Delos Reyes Law Office, Pirates' Cove, Mayor Jaldon Street, Canelar, Zamboanga City
4. Victor Augustus B. Filamor - (Court appointed rehabilitation receiver) c/o C1 28 B, Padilla, San Juan, Metro Manila
5. The Honorable Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission, EDSA, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila
6. Bank of Commerce, Zamboanga City
7. United Coconut Planters Bank, Zamboanga City
8. Keppel Bank, Zamboanga City

SO ORDERED.

This 27th day of December 2005 at Zamboanga City, Philippines.

(Sgd.) **GREGORIO V. DE LA PEÑA, III**
Presiding Judge

(PDI - Jan. 12 & 16, 2006)

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Tariff on ceramic tiles slashed

By Ronnel W .Domingo

THE SAFEGUARD TARIFF ON IMported ceramic tiles has been reduced to P2.45 a kilo for 2006, following a review provided under a measure extending the duty for three years, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

In an order dated Jan. 6, Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said the tariff was 12.5 percent lower than the P2.80 imposed last year, or the first year of the extension.

Favila said the safeguard tariff would again be reviewed this year and the next.

The safeguard tariff is an additional duty imposed on an imported article, in the event that substantial importation of the product has been seen to cause injury to the domestic industry.

Similar to dumping and countervailing measures, the safeguard duty is one of the trade protection measures available under the World Trade Organization.

According to Favila, it was found out during the review that the importation of ceramic floor and wall tiles from China and Hong Kong increased to 90 percent of the total volume of tiles shipped in between January and October 2005.

In 2003, imports from China and Hong Kong represented only 13 percent.

"It was also observed that the continuous growth of imports posed a threat to the viability of the domestic industry and could affect the industry's efforts to improve its competitiveness," Favila said.

Further, it was seen that the landed costs of imports from China increased by 93 percent to P16.14 a kilo as of October 2005 from P8.79 in September 2004.

In the same period, the average landed cost from all countries covered by the safeguard measure went up 62.1 percent to P15.97 a kilo from P9.59.

But Favila said there was no assurance that the uptrend in landed costs would continue.

He said that a reduction of landed costs of imports to 2004 levels would negate the positive gains made by the local industry.

"Selling prices of locally produced ceramic tiles showed a moderate increase of 5.7 percent from 2004 to October 2005, which indicates that the local industry is positively adjusting to import competition," the trade chief said.

Experience points to domestic demand as key economic driver

"*HINDI KO MAN KAYANG SAGUTIN ang mga problema ng bayan, at least di ako dumadagdag sa mga problema,*" muses Aling Fely as she listens to the news on her Taiwan-made radio. A closer look at her home shows shelves of American canned goods, Hong Kong branded clothes and a big-screen Korean TV. "*May dalawang hulog pa yan, pero matatapos ko na bayaran,*" she proudly confides. Little does she know, her seemingly unrelated disregard for local brands and products is a key economic driver that most Filipinos simply ignore.

This practice of preferring foreign products over locally made goods is a common occurrence in the Philippines, discouraging the growth of local products and industries. Many economists believe that this particular behavior of consumers could benefit from a revamp.

Several economic sectors argue that buying locally produced goods will help strengthen the domestic market for local products. In turn, this encourages the growth of local industries that provides added employment opportunities for Filipinos.

They added that local patronage, if and when it becomes a habit among consumers, will help speed up the country's bid to industrialize. This makes the economy stronger and eventually trickles down to an improved lifestyle for the average Pinoy.

This is not an untested theory. A classic example is Thailand's rebound from the 1997 East Asian economic crisis. After the collapse of Thailand's baht, this middle-income country whose exports reached a growth rate of 22% per annum, was suddenly faced with a –10.2% economic growth in 1998.

However, partly through restructuring policies initiated by the Thai government, the country's economic growth radically improved to 6.3% by 2003.

One of the major factors that caused this upswing is the shift from the over-reliance on external trade to a more domestic-led spending. This particular domestic demand-led policy puts emphasis and priority on building demand for local goods and services aimed at boosting internal growth.

Primarily led by a change in attitude, this policy was cascaded and supported by the Thai public and economy.

Sure enough, this move not only helped their economy bounce back, it even made it more resilient, continuously growing despite global uncertainties like terror attacks and the recent SARS crisis.

There is no reason why this particular model can't be applied to the Philippine economy. "The first step is to educate the masses about how they can help the country grow by buying local products," states an economist who teaches at a local university. "They need to know that every little bit can echo into bigger things like helping the economy and creating more jobs. Ultimately, it all comes back to them."

While surprised with the information, Aling Fely was amendable to prioritizing the purchase of local products. With a glimmer in her eye, she points to the sandals on her feet. "*Ayan o, gawang Marikina,*" she proudly says.

ALAM MO BA NA ANG
BAWAT PISONG NAPUPUNTA
SA PAGTANGKILIK NG MGA
PRODUKTONG GAWA SA ATIN
AY PISONG NAGTATANGGOL
SA ATING EKONOMIYA...
NA ANG BAWAT PISONG PINAMBIBILI
NG MGA BAGAY NA SARILING ATIN
AY PISONG NAGTUTULAK
SA ATING PAGSULONG...
NA ANG BAWAT PISONG
NAGPAPALAGO NG PAMBANSANG KABAN
AY PISONG NAGDUDULOT
NG PAMBANSANG KAUNLARAN...
ALAM MO BA KUNG
SAAN NAPUPUNTA
ANG PISO MO?

E-mail: pr_business@inquirer.com.ph
Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

BUSINESS Monday

BPO ventures such as call centers are expected to generate $3.7 billion in revenues this year, a 52-percent increase over 2005.

PDI PHOTO

BUSINESS OUTSOURCING SECTOR

Skills may be lacking but growth expected

By Erwin Oliva
Inq7

DESPITE THE CHALLENGES OF finding more quality skills to man the booming industry, now known as business process outsourcing (BPO), and the threat from other countries like India, the local outsourcing industry still expects to grow this year.

In a joint forecast by the Business Process Association of the Philippines (BPAP), Board of Investments (BOI) and the Commission on Information and Communications Technology, the Philippine outsourcing industry is expected to generate 103,000 new jobs in 2006, or a 44 percent increase from 2005.

The same forecast showed that about 81,000 new jobs were created in 2005, which is a 53 percent growth from 2004 figures. Based on these growth rates, there is a foreseen slowdown in the generation of newer jobs year-on-year.

The forecast also noted that the outsourcing industry is expected to generate $3.7 billion in revenues this year, or a 52 percent growth over 2005.

"The prospects are still bright for the Philippine outsourcing industry," according to Celeste Ilagan, executive director of the International promotions of the BOI.

She noted that information technology-related projects registered with the BOI have increased in 2005, and are projected to increase by over 50 percent in 2006. "But we will need to develop more niches in this booming outsourcing industry," she adds.

Dan Reyes, president of the BPAP, says that he is bullish about the prospects in 2006, but admits that the industry is faced with the challenge of finding quality skills to man expanding operations in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, the call center or customer care industry will account for majority of the new jobs in 2006, according to Rafy David, president of the Contact Center Association of the Philippines.

He says that the organization, which represents businesses doing outsourced call center work for foreign clients, projects 70 percent growth in 2006 in terms of revenues. "We also want to stress that for every one call center job created, two support service jobs are created," David adds, noting the boom of the real-estate, convenient store and restaurant business in areas where call centers are.

Josephine Gonzales, senior corporate liaison officer of SPI

SKILLS/ B2-2

RP must tap into Asian lifestyle trade fairs

THE PHILIPPINES MUST INCLUDE in its development priorities a serious bid to seize market share in Asia's multibillion-dollar international trade fair industry.

The Philippines has fallen far behind other countries to the point where not a single truly international trade fair is held here regularly. Events Eye, an agency that tracks international trade fairs, conventions and exhibitions, listed only five international Philippine trade fairs in 2006.

"Gaining Philippine leadership in at least one sector of Asia's trade fair business makes sound business sense," said Henry Schumacher, executive vice president of the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP).

"Quite apart from the huge revenues the Philippines stands to gain, trade fairs are a catalyst for economic growth. They're a proven and cost effective magnet that draws foreign investments year in and year out."

He pointed to Germany as an example of a country where trade fairs are taken so seriously that cities fight hard for the right to host them. Five of the top 10 trade fair companies in terms of turnover worldwide are located in Germany.

AUMA (the Association of the German Trade Fair Industry) estimated that Germany's 158 trade fairs in 2004 generated some 23 billion euros (P1.6 trillion) for the German economy and created 250,000 jobs.

Philippine trade fairs, however, tend to be too local in focus with too many competing shows on food, construction, furniture, gifts, toys, fashion accessories and Christmas decor. Philippine trade fairs have also attracted fewer international buyers year-on-year.

In contrast, China, Asia's trade fair leader, hosts hundreds of fairs annually, including the regional versions of major shows such as Koelnmesse's Cebit for the ICT (information and communications technology) industry.

Cebit, held every March in Hannover, Germany, is the world's largest ICT trade fair. This mammoth event drew two million visitors and 8,000 exhibitors in 2005 and has an Asian version held in Shanghai, China, every September.

Needed: Unique RP concept

Schumacher suggested jump-starting the process of regaining our trade fair competitiveness by creating a strong and unique Philippine trade fair concept. The concept has to be distinctively different from China, has to focus on design and quality, and should involve elements of Asean (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) culture.

A strategic partnership between private business and government will also be essential to the success of this effort.

A valuable storehouse of knowledge about international trade fairs exists locally in Fairs & More Inc. (FMI), an ECCP unit tasked with developing the international trade fairs business in the Philippines.

ECCP/FMI has been at the forefront of either pushing the Philippines as an important trade fair site or in promoting the Philippines and Philippine companies in European, Middle East and Asian trade fairs.

Schumacher said FMI's network of global partners allows FMI to bring to the Philippines international players who may partner in developing locally based trade shows and help internationalize existing ones, provided the concept is right.

"But the window of opportunity is narrow. Hong Kong, Singapore and Bangkok are positioning themselves as the trade fair hubs of the future.

"India is becoming more and more attractive. International trade fair organizers are positioning themselves accordingly. It's now or never for the international trade fairs business in the Philippines," said Schumacher.

Schumacher warned it is no longer sufficient to be a trade fair leader in just one region.

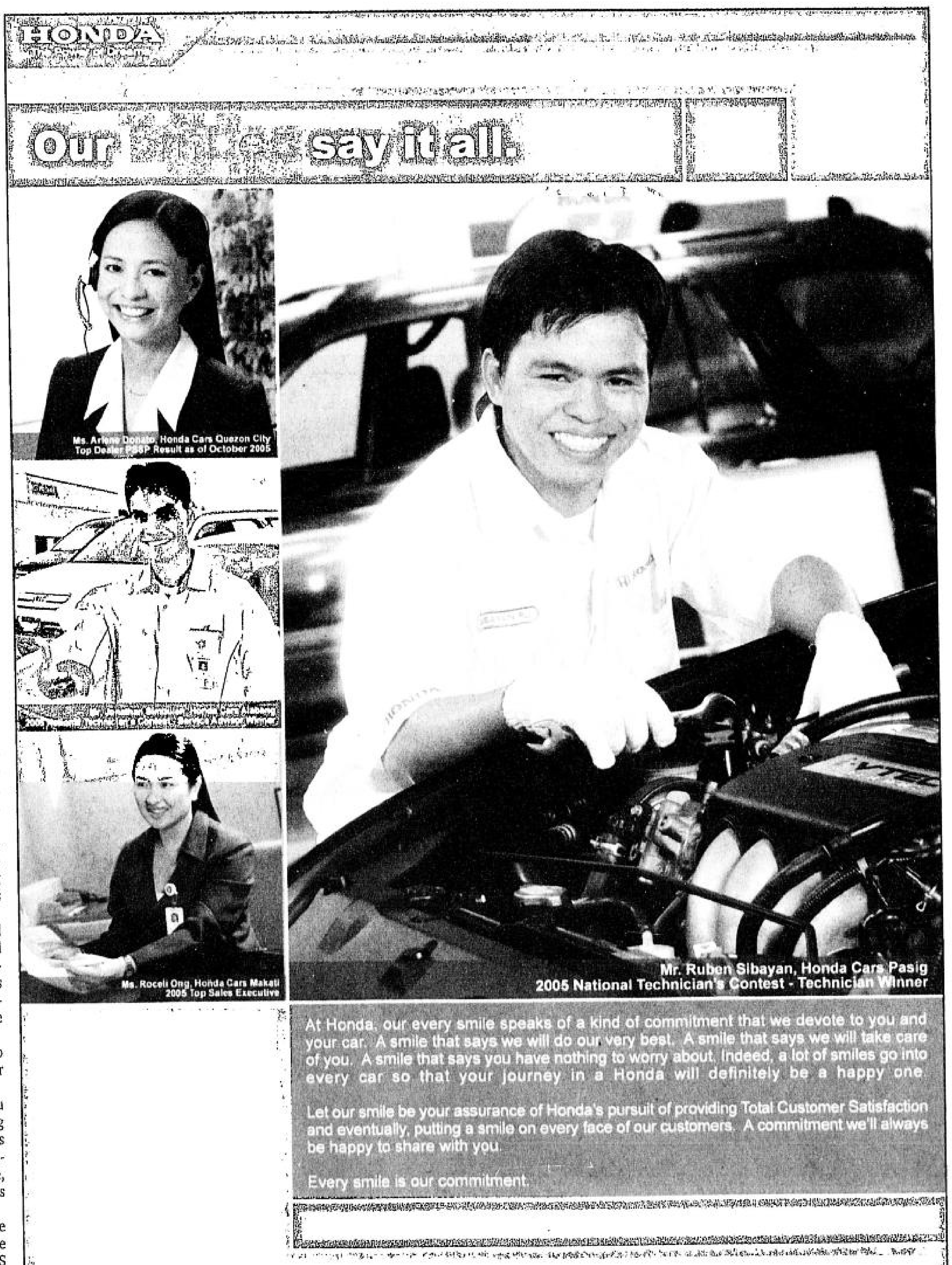
"If you lead in Europe, you must offer your clients a leading show in Asia and in the US. This is exactly the course some of the European trade fair organizers take, developing or buying into shows around the world."

"We are already active in the Middle East and Asia, but we are exploring opportunities in the US and South America," Schumacher noted.

Milan, Paris, Birmingham, Madrid, Valencia and Moscow are also determined to get a major share of the world market.

As it stands now, however,

RP MUST/ B5



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Recreating an urban waterfront

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Felino A. Palafox Jr.

PASIG RIVER HAS LONG BEEN declared biologically dead, meaning, its waters are no longer fit for consumption and bathing. Marine life can no more thrive. This is because of the irresponsible treatment of this river.

'Pasig River has become a public sewage disposal. Industrial plants are put up along the banks for easy disposal of their chemical wastes. Informal settlers have long found the banks of the river a convenient location to put up their settlements, making Pasig River an instant "privy," a dumping site of their unwanted materials and domestic waste.

The waters of this river, which Rizal glamorized in his literary works, have turned murky and stagnant. Structures have turned away from the river.

With its present state, Pasig River is a water course that shows the stark realities of a Third World country.

Water courses, since time immemorial, have been one of the most efficient transport systems in the world. The opening of Panama Canal has brought efficiency and expedited travel and transport of goods in the Americas. Instead of going around the South American continent, vessels from New York going to San Francisco would just have to take the canal. This lessened travel time and cost. Pasig River, history records show, had already been the transport system since the time of the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade and the barter activities between Filipino and Chinese merchants. The city of Manila would never have evolved into a profitable trading center had it not been for Pasig River.

Water courses have significantly contributed to make business work. Interestingly, civilization started along the banks of Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Thereby, the very first means of transport (read: highway) dating back ancient times were water courses. But at the turn of the century, water courses declined from their glorious state. They deteriorated, caused by man's irresponsible use, treating them as "back of the house" which encourages squatting or informal settlements along the banks and the unscrupulous disposal of industrial and domestic waste.

It is imperative to recreate urban waterfront. The significance waterfronts have brought to humanity cannot just be ignored. The objective of recreating waterfronts is to bring forth the appreciation of a long neglected asset. Rivers and lakes in the more progressive cities in the world consider waterfronts as front door of activity.

By creating lush and inviting promenades and parks, esplanade, and areas for socializing like al fresco dining, cafes and riverside restaurants, informal settlements may be eliminated. When developed, these water bodies will enhance and expand leisure and recreational use and thus will encourage tourism industry; the disposal of waste can be prevented. The development will also conserve marine life, enhance waterscape, and add to the amenity value of water and resources.

Transport system will be augmented giving commuters more options thereby decongesting traffic. Water courses as system of transportation will speed up travel time, getting to one's destination faster—no more delays in the delivery of goods and will provide accessibility to coastal communities that are inaccessible to land transportation.

Waterfront development can link history and architecture. With community participation, resuscitation of "dying" water bodies can be realized. The development can make waterfronts more visually appealing. The Philippines has many rivers and lakes that need to be protected from degradation and pollution. Waterfront development can help preserve and conserve these natural assets that are imperiled for depletion if abuse of these water bodies continues.

(The author is a MAP governor and principal architect, Urban Planner and founder of Palafox Associates. Feedback at mapsec@globenet.com.ph.)

Skills may be lacking . . .

From page B2-1

Technologies, says that other than call centers, the outsourced back-office industry is also expected to generate more jobs in the country.

These are also the same expectations from the Philippine animation and software development industry in 2006.

Marilyn Montano, president of the Animation Council of the Philippines, says the Philippine animation industry hopes to sustain a 20 percent growth in total revenues over the next five years. The Philippine animation industry is currently a $40 million business, while the global animation outsourcing industry is valued at $72 billion, she adds.

The BPAP-BOI-CICT projections indicate that the animation industry will generate 7,000 new jobs in 2006. In 2005, about 4,500 jobs were generated from outsourced animation work to the Philippines.

The Philippine software development is currently focused on a program, dubbed Fly-High 2010, which hopes to generate more jobs for this sector, according to Mon Villar, executive director of the Philippine Software Industry Association.

The software development industry, which deals with projects for export, is projected to generate 20,000 jobs in 2006. Meanwhile, the software development industry dealing with the domestic market is projected to employ 31,000 people this year.

A Canada-based market research firm predicted that the outsourcing will lose its luster in 2006, as organizations decide to take back certain IT operations that have been outsourced to third-party providers.

"As a number of multi-year deals are up for renewal globally, outsourcing will lose its luster as organizations take back certain IT functions, selectively outsource, or set up their own remote operations," XMG stated in its 2006 prediction report found at www.xmg-global.com.

It added that with heightened awareness of the capabilities of Asia Pacific countries and the increasing internal tolerance for risks in operating offshore, several organizations that have previously outsourced multi-year contracts with an offshore component will set up its own remote operations offshore to support its internal business process and IT requirements.

The Philippine outsourcing industry, in partnership with the Department of Trade Industry, is scheduled to hold this e-Services Philippines conference and exhibition at Edsa Shangri-La Manila on Feb. 16 to 17, 2006.

Organized by the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions, the e-Services Philippines will invite international and local speakers to discuss the prospects of the outsourcing industry in 2006.

The conference and exhibition will also feature global industry experts on emerging issues affecting the industry. Avinash Vashistha, founder and managing director of outsourcing consultancy neoIT and author of Offshore Nation, is among those invited to speak at the conference.

Nigel Roxburgh, founding director of UK's National Outsourcing Association, has also been invited to discuss prospects in the UK market.

CEO gets leadership award

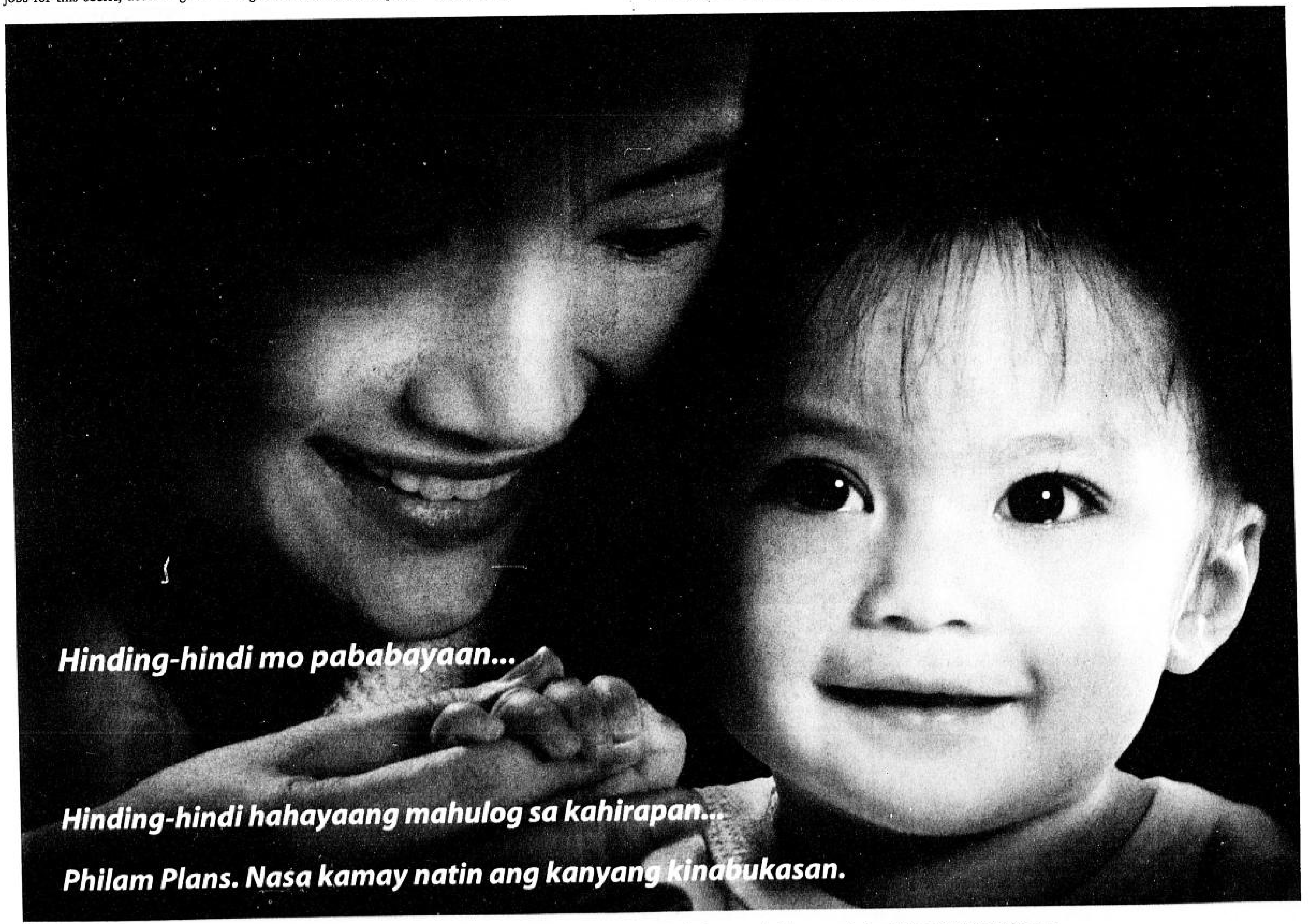
THE ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS Communicators (IABC) Philippines conferred to Shell companies in the Philippines (SciP) country chairman Edgar O. Chua the 2005 Communication Excellence in Organizations (CEO) Excel Awards. Chua is one of the four winners chosen among 20 nominees in the manufacturing category. The nominees are evaluated by independent judges on the basis of set criteria and are not competing against each other. Country chair Ed Chua was awarded for his leadership in the SciP programs including leaders and millennium development goals (MDGs) initiative, health, safety, and environment (HSE) management and corporate social responsibility and sustainable development advocacy.

CHUA

As country chairman, Chua has sustained the programs for the organization that did not only achieve its valuable objectives but also fostered a corporate culture of collaborative effort involving employees, partners, and neighbors. He has been in active support of advocacies on corporate social responsibility and sustainable development to contribute to nation building. He similarly led the promotion of health, safety, and environment by sharing his know-how to the business industry as elected chairman of the Philippine Business for the Environment and co-chairman of the environment committee of the Management Association of the Philippines. As designated chair of the business cluster on health of the "Business and Millennium Development Goals Initiative," Chua helped organize the country's business sector to synergize efforts in the health area toward the achievement of the millennium development targets.

The CEO Excel Awards, the local version of the world IABC Excel Award, is given to senior executives who have successfully harnessed communication in advancing the reputation, enhancing the profitability or achieving major objectives of their organizations.

The annual competition is meant to raise public awareness on the importance of communication in business and organizational management, to recognize top-level executives or managers who have shown extraordinary skills as communicators, and to present their accomplishments as models of best practices in organizational communication.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THE REMARKABLE GROWTH OF THE UNIT INVESTMENT TRUST FUNDS

The year 2005 was a tough year but more than that, it was a rewarding year for the Unit Investment Trust Fund (UITF) business in the Philippines. With the implementation of BSP Circular 447, trust entities revolutionized the approach to personal investment with the introduction of UITFs. The total Assets Under Management (AUM) of the UITF industry reached an astonishing level of over P100B as of the end of 2005, making the product one of the most successful in the financial industry in recent years.

A UITF is an open-ended pooled trust fund denominated in Philippine Peso or U.S. Dollar, which is operated and administered by a trust entity and made available by participation. Each UITF product is operated and governed by a Declaration of Trust, approved by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), which contains the mechanics for investing, operating and administering the fund.

With the majority of the UITFs introduced in the 2nd quarter of 2005, the product, even at its current infancy stage, has already gained notable acceptance from the investing public.

Currently, there are about 70 UITFs in the market offered by 20 Trust institutions while applications for 8 new UITFs from 3 financial institutions are still awaiting BSP approval. The new funds once approved and introduced into the market will make the product offering even more robust.

The marketing personnel of banks and trust entities are required to be certified to sell the UITFs. These personnel should be able to discuss the features, benefits and risks in investing in UITFs.

UITFs are available in a wide-range of fund types: money market, fixed income, balanced and equity, in both Philippine Peso and in U.S. Dollar contributions. Assets of the UITFs are marked-to-market; therefore, providing investors with more accurate and fair value of the investments of the fund. It ensures that no participant in the fund is put at a disadvantage as a consequence of new investors coming in or of existing investors getting out of the fund. The mark-to-market methodology is in accordance with international best practices. Investors in the UITF enjoy better earning potentials without having to invest very large sums of money.

The growth of the UITFs is partly attributed to the good performance of both fixed income and equity markets last year giving more opportunities for professional fund managers to outperform the set fund benchmarks, as well as other investment vehicles. Likewise, the efforts of trust entities in educating their marketing personnel and informing clients of the benefits and advantages of the product are also credited for the amazing growth.

While it is advisable for investors to stay invested in the UITF for a longer period of time, clients can generally redeem units of participation at any time. The fund will not have difficulty redeeming such units of participation because UITF investments are limited to marketable or tradable securities. Another benefit of the UITFs is the wide choice of minimum investment amounts offered by the trust entities. Investors both novice and savvy ones can choose from a wide range of minimum investment participation.

To ensure the sustained growth of the UITFs in terms of product depth, distribution channels and best practices, the Trust Officers Association of the Philippines (TOAP), in close coordination with its member institutions, retail fund market experts and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), did a workshop conference in October of 2005 aptly called UITF Workshop Conference: Crafting a Medium Term Plan. Additionally, the association endeavors to continually educate the investing public through press releases, awareness campaigns and investors fora.

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–John, Web Developer
UITF Investor
A brilliant strategist whose confidence exudes in solutions development
–Michael, IT Specialist
UITF Investor
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UCPB

Malayan High School of Science inaugurated today

A NEW SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL DESTINED to become an international center of excellence will be officially unveiled today. Dubbed the Malayan High School of Science (MHSS), this new learning institution will boast of an advanced curriculum, state-of-the-art facilities and a Wi-Fi campus, all designed to immerse students in current and future developments in science and technology.

The opening ceremony is to be conducted at the school site at Paz Guazon Street, Pandacan, Manila. Leading this significant event is Alfonso T. Yuchengco, former Philippine Ambassador to China and Japan and chair of the Mapua board of trustees. Joining him is Dr. Reynaldo Vea, president of Mapua Institute of Technology and the new MHSS.

Invited personalities include former President Fidel V. Ramos, Manila Mayor Lito V. Atienza, former Senate President Jovito R. Salonga, Dr. Fe Hidalgo, OIC-Undersecretary of the Department of Education; Dr. Estrella F. Alabastro, Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology, as well as other government officials, business leaders, and top executives of the Yuchengco Group of Companies.

Vea explained that MHSS is empowered with the mission of helping the country develop globally competitive human resources in the area of science and technology. The school's program objective is to produce graduates who can gain admission to and successfully hurdle scientific and technological degree programs in the best colleges and universities in the country and abroad.

"The founding of the Malayan High School of Science is an attempt to contribute to our country's efforts to take full advantage of a global, knowledge-based economy," he said. "It is a way of giving more Filipino families the opportunity to have their children undergo a high school education of international standards, which will hopefully open many doors for them in later years."

"The Malayan High School of Science will show the same dedication to quality education and the same wonder of imagination and innovation for which Mapua, the mother institution, is well known," continued Vea.

To attain the school's objective, MHSS has established a set of desired outcomes of its academic program. It shall educate students to have a very strong foundation in the natural sciences and mathematics; excellent communications skills in English and, optionally, in Mandarin; a deep appreciation of the most important present-day technologies such as biotechnology, robotics, computers, telecommunications, microelectronics and new materials; an analytical mind and a creative, innovative spirit; awareness of social, global and environmental issues; love of country and humanity.

The Malayan High School of Science is now accepting student applicants for its school opening this June. Interested parents and students may submit admission requirements to the MHSS admissions office at the ground floor of Mapua Institute of Technology in Intramuros, Manila, or in Makati City.

For admission inquiries, call 562-9231, 562-9381, 562-9329 or 562-8516, or e-mail hs.admissions@malayanscience.net.ph, or visit www.malayanscience.net.ph.

Bits & Clips

PAWD exhibition

THE PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF WATER DISTRICTS (PAWD), A national umbrella organization of more than 600 provincial water utilities, will be holding its annual Products and Services Exhibition in conjunction with the 27th PAWD National Conference from Jan. 17 to 20 at the Sarabia Manor Hotel & Convention Center. The 2006 show will gather local and foreign manufacturers and suppliers, agents and distributors, and dealers of products and/or services needed in the development and promotion of the country's provincial water supply utilities. The event will be the right market and the right place to establish contacts to explore bigger business opportunities. Product presenters include JG Summit Petrochemical Inc. Eurovek Building Solutions, Inc, Asea Brown Boveri, Ranhill KWI SDN BHD and Local Water Utilities Administration sponsor the exhibition 2005.

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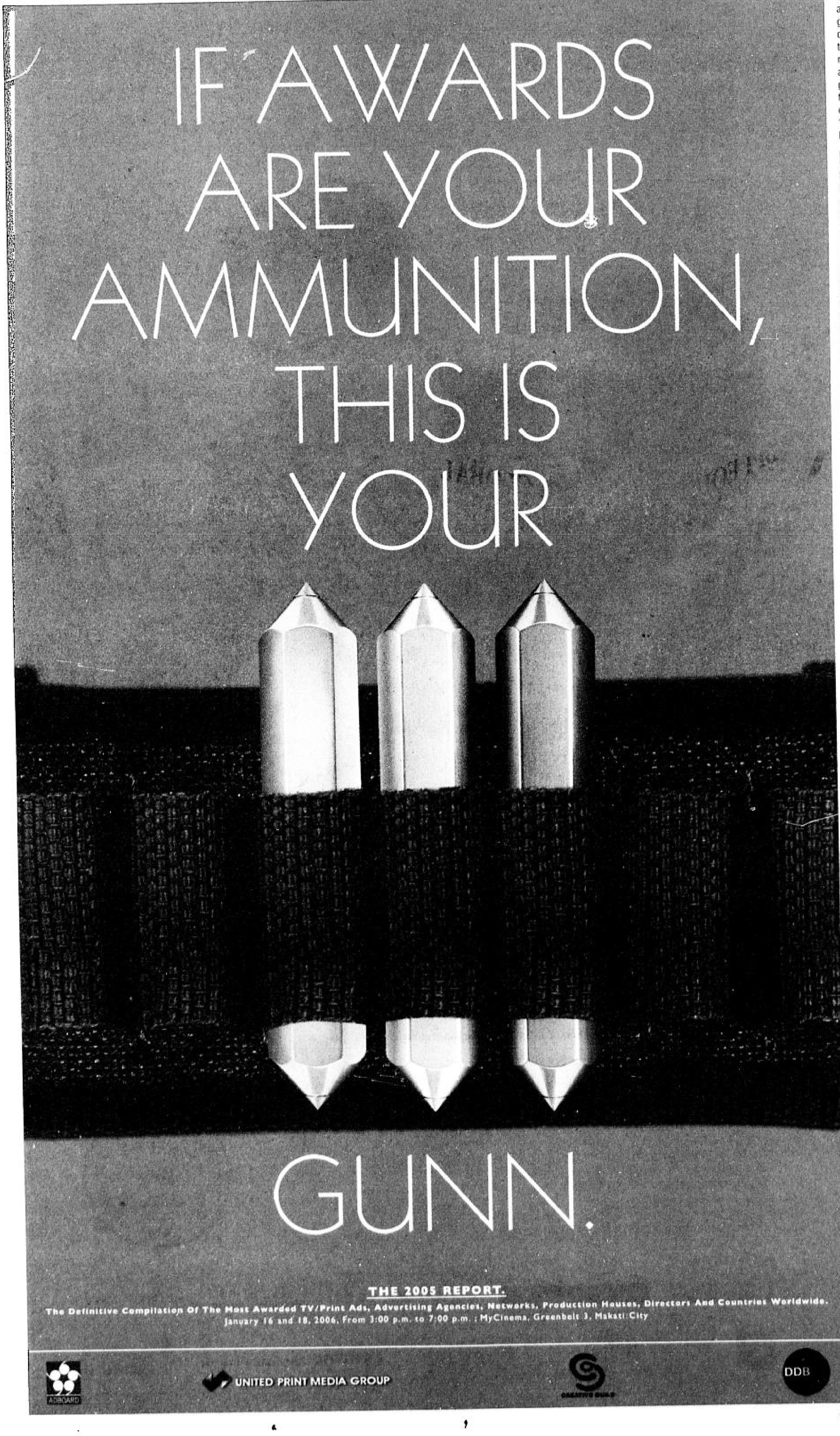
BURGER KING FEATURES THE KING KONG MEAL. THE KING Kong Meal is a filling serving of the Whopper Jr, large fries and a 32-oz Coke that comes in its own collectible King Kong tumbler. Every time you purchase this meal, you are treated to a peel-open card with instant freebies you can claim on your next visit. Keep this card for it is also your gateway to owning cool new gadgets! Just text in the unique code found in the card for a chance to win every week. The more times you text in, the more chances of winning. You also have the option to "Kong It!" any burger value meal for only P39 and you get the same Kong-sized side and drink: large fries and a 32-oz Coke, of course in the limited edition King Kong tumbler. Every meal you "Kong It!" also entitles you to win in the weekly raffle. This offer is only until Jan. 17.

Biotech venture summit

FROM JAN. 17 TO 20, HYBRIDIGM CONSULTING, THE first bio-consultancy firm in the country and Businessmaker Academy Educational Center will be holding the 2nd annual Philippine Biotechnology Venture Summit. The Summit's primary objective is to promote the advancement and better understanding of biotechnology in the Philippines by calling together scientists, academics, regulators, policy formulators, venture capitalists, and mainstream businessmen to discuss new trends, discoveries and business opportunities. Interested attendees may register online through www.philbiotech.com and call to confirm at 687-4445, 687-4645, or 687-3416. Biotechnology is a $250-billion industry and is expected to grow into a trillion-dollar industry in the next few years. Although biotechnology has been around for centuries, no practical education and focus has been given on how enterprising Filipinos can get into this lucrative field.



THE 2005 REPORT.
The Definitive Compilation Of The Most Awarded TV/Print Ads, Advertising Agencies, Networks, Production Houses, Directors And Countries Worldwide.
January 16 and 18, 2006. From 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. : MyCinema, Greenbelt 3, Makati City

Health & Lifestyle tackles the 'Big C'

HEALTH & LIFESTYLE CELEBRATES THE new year with showbiz's charming trio of Carmina Villaroel and sisters Janice and Gelli de Belen on the cover. The magazine's first offering for 2006 features the three hosts of the popular morning talk show "Sis" who reveal life lessons that have guided them in their ways as moms, daughters and wives.

On the medical front, readers are guided how to size down the "Big C" (cancer)-and their fear of it-with the most up-to-date facts and information from medical experts. The medical section features cancer-related articles, from prevention tips to real stories of cancer victims going through the ordeal and triumphing over the disease. Readers can get inspired by the magazine's main feature-a heartwarming story of three brave souls who gave their cancer a good fight-and prevailed. It conveys the message clearly that a diagnosis of cancer need not be like a death sentence.

Also featured in the lifestyle section of the magazine are doctors whose hobbies include tending to and hanging out with their pets. These doctors prove to be not only good in giving quality care to their patients, but to their pets as well which, for them, are "just like family."

The January issue of the magazine, which has received an award last year as a favored publication on health and lifestyle, also contains amusing and informative articles on travel, fashion, technology, and a lot more.

Health & Lifestyle magazine is available at all National Bookstore branches and major magazine stands. It is published by FAME Inc, which also publishes Diabetease, a magazine for diabetics and those at risk of developing diabetes. For subscription inquiries, call 894-0843, 813-5433, 813-5436, 812-8696. or e-mail sales@fame.ph.

Health & Lifestyle
Big "C"
Surviving cancer
Teaming up against cancer
Caring for cancer patients
Celebrate New Year with Sis
Grooming your pets

'Poverty alleviation key to regional economic interdependence'

ROBERTO F. DE OCAMPO, PRESIDENT of the Asian Institute of Management, discussed "Managing Regional Economic Interdependence" and focused on three concerns at the recently concluded 6th Regional Meeting of the Trilateral Commission Pacific Asia Group held in Beijing, China.

The Trilateral Commission is a major international think tank founded in 1973 to draw together the highest-level group to collectively examine the common problems facing the three regions of the European Union, North America, and Pacific Asia. De Ocampo, former secretary of finance of the Philippines, is among the first Asean members of the commission.

The three concerns he focused on were: that economic interdependence is an unavoidable by-product of globalization; that the private sector had begun to play an increasingly important role in economic growth and stability; and that rapid technological advancement had permanently altered the mechanisms of international finance that, if not well managed, could result in less desirable outcomes.

Setting the Asian financial crisis as a backdrop, De Ocampo believes that there are issues that need to be addressed to ensure effective interdependence. He said that there is a need to reduce tensions between countries with less than friendly relationships. He also held that disparities across incomes and governance might make interdependence a bit longer than it would have been otherwise. Efforts must be expended to narrow the gap between these disparities.

He also recognized that fighting poverty is a formidable challenge the world, especially Asia, faces. "If integration is seen to least benefit, or even hurt the poor, then regional integration will remain unpopular with some sectors," said De Ocampo.

"Thus, to make regional economic interdependence more acceptable to the poor, poverty must be alleviated," he added. Resolving these issues, De Ocampo concludes, are crucial to an effective economic interdependence.

DE OCAMPO

The end of the Cold War called for a fresh vision of what an outward-looking partnership could accomplish. The opportunities were remarkable, and yet, part of the "glue" that held the three regions together, had dissolved. Helping meet this leadership challenge is at the heart of today's Trilateral Commission effort.

MOVEMENTS

Lawyer is new PMAP prexy

EMERICO O. DE GUZMAN, SENIOR PARTNER OF Angara Abello Concepcion Regala & Cruz law offices (Accralaw), was elected president of Personal Management Association of the Philippines for 2006 during the PMAP elections.

PMAP is an organization of human resource professionals from all over the country, with more than 1,200 members representing many of the leading companies in various industries nationwide.

De Guzman, a labor law practitioner, has experience in the negotiation, conciliation and resolution of various workplace issues, and has HR experience in recruitment, performance evaluation and general HR management, both in government and in the private sector.

He holds degrees in Psychology and Law from the University of the Philippines, and recently graduated from the Academy of American and International Law in Plano/Dalla, Texas.

PLDT exec is new chamber head

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. vice president Butch Meily was recently elected president of the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce, one of the oldest bilateral business organizations based in the United States.

As the new president of the organization, Meily will continue and implement new ones that will foster trade and investment between the Philippines and the United States.

"There are new emerging opportunities that companies in the US and the Philippines can explore and the Fil-Am Chamber can be a catalyst for turning these opportunities to concrete results," said Meily.

He added that he and the other officers and members of the chamber will all help in making this possible in the coming years.

Aside from Meily, the other newly elected officers include Richard Rosenberg, president of American Energy Systems, as chair; and Joanne de Asis, chair of Globe Capital Partners, as advisory committee chair.

PSBank appoints new officers

PSBANK has appointed three new senior officers.

The new appointees are Ma. Patricia L. Castañeda, Edeza Agpasin-Que and Adeline L. Grimares.

Castañeda, who will serve as vice president of the bank, was appointed chief risk officer under the risk management committee, whose members are appointed by the board of directors and given the authority and overall responsibility for the bank's risk management.

Castañeda was also designated as a member of the management committee, which directs and oversees bank operations and secretariat of assets and liabilities committee, which manages the PSBank's balance sheet.

She was formerly with Standard Chartered Bank as AVP/risk manager for credit where her chief responsibilities included credit risk and portfolio management, regular monitoring of credit risk indicators and ensuring full compliance to all the local regulations and standards that govern credit risk management.

PSBank's credit administration group was also beefed up with a commercial credit evaluation head with the recent appointment of Grimares as assistant vice president. She was formerly with UCPB as account manager-assistant vice president.

AC Nielsen has new managing director

AC NIELSEN Philippines announced the appointment of Benedicto Cid as its new managing director.

Before joining AC Nielsen Philippines, Poch had over 30 years' experience in marketing and general management roles at a number of FMCG companies.

Most recently, he was general manager of IDS Marketing (Philippines) Inc., a leading distributor of consumer goods. Before that, he was with New Zealand Milk, Kellogg and Gillette, where he was posted to Australia and Singapore.

He began his career at Procter and Gamble, starting in market research then moving to brand management.

In his new role, he assumes overall responsibility for the direction and leadership of the customized consumer research, retail measurement and consumer panel business units of AC Nielsen Philippines.

Ordoñez is new AFCM vice president

Ernesto M. Ordoñez, president of Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (CeMAP), was elected vice president of the Asean Federation of Cement Manufacturers (AFCM) during the 14th AFCM conference held recently in Singapore.

Ordoñez will serve as vice president for two years, after which, following tradition, he is expected to be elected as AFCM president for another two years when the federation holds its 15th conference in Vietnam late in 2007.

Ordoñez said: "We intend to build on the goodwill AFCM has achieved in the past year. We will do this not only by sharing our best technologies but also by helping each other in the area of international trade policy and practices as we in Asean face the globalization challenges and the opportunities today."

RP must . . .

From page B1

Philippine companies must participate in foreign trade fairs to create international awareness for their products.

Wilbert Novero, FMI vice president for international fairs, said 75 Philippine companies are to participate in five major European trade fairs from January to February 2006.

He said the number was unexpectedly high compared to last year.

"These Philippine companies realize Europe is a market virtually ignored here and they want to take advantage of European opportunities," he noted.

Asia is seen as one of the "hot spots" for trade fair growth in the next few years. This focus on Asian trade fairs by Germany and other Europeans offers the Philippines an opportunity to climb aboard this bandwagon and reap the rewards while there's still time.

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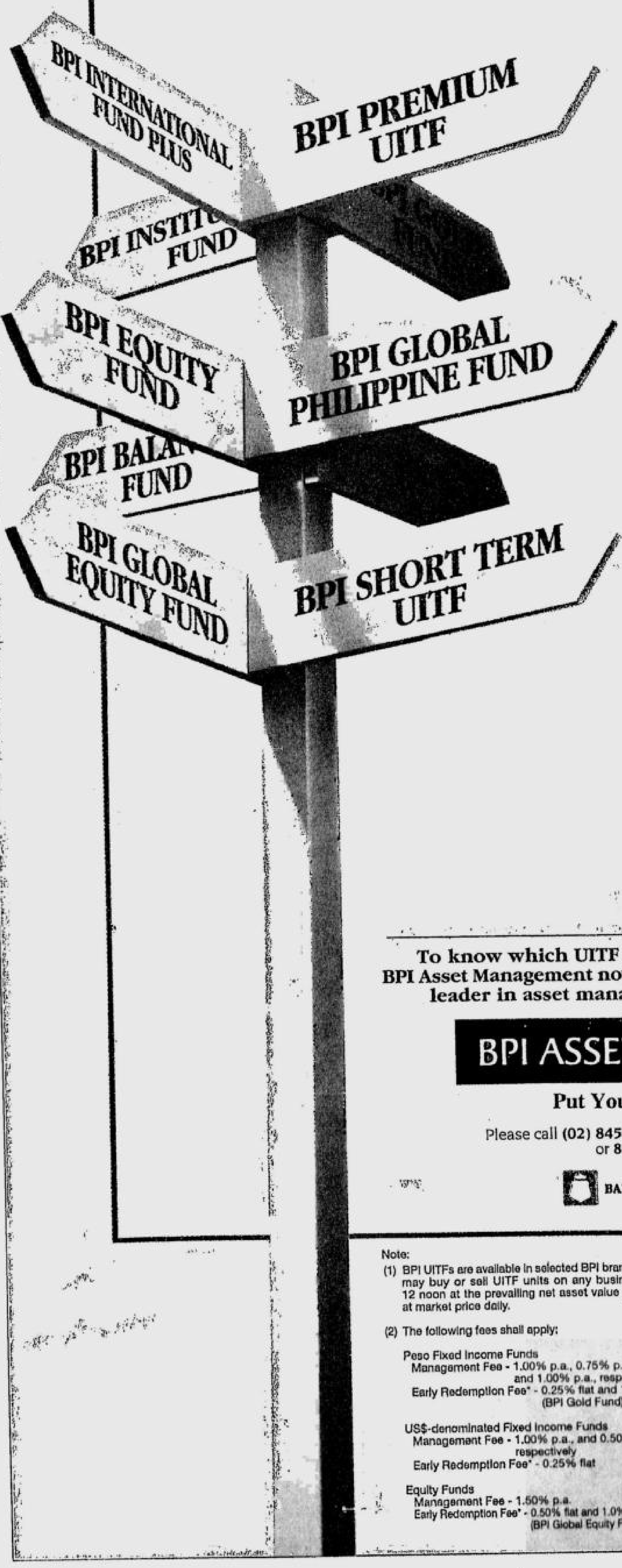

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Equity Funds
BPI Balanced Fund
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Ortigas & Co., Mandaluyong City

Industries: Shopping center, real estate, construction materials
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Superpowers: Vision and innovation
Claim to Fame: Greenhills Shopping Center, Fronta Verde/Tiendesitas
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Ruby T. Gon, 44
schu, four branches in Metro Manila and one in Da[illegible]

Industry: Shoe retailing
Training: Economics, Women in Development at the University of the Philippines; Interior Design and Sculpture
Superpowers: Persistence and determination
Claim to Fame: schu — a shoe store popular for its avant-garde European designs
Secret Weapon: Microsoft Dynamics for Retail Management
Sidekick: Global Implementation Services, Inc. (811-2000, marketing@gisimplement.com)

ARGON THE ENLIGHTENED
Gerardo V. Cabochan Jr., [illegible]
Pandayan Bookshop, [illegible] branches Luzon-wide

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Training: AB Political Science, Ateneo de Manila University
Superpower: Competes with larger bookstores by offering caring and attentive customer service
Claim to Fame: Retail stores set up classroom-style in order to foster learning and the exchange of ideas
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LADY HEELSTRIKE
Jayjay C. [illegible]
schu, four branches in [illegible] and one in Davao

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Training: Bachelor's degree and juris doctor at Ateneo de Manila University
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Secret Weapon: Microsoft Dynamics for Retail Management
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COOL FACTOR
Prudencio S. Garcia, 45
Mekeni Food Corporation, Pampanga

Industry: Meat processing
Training: B.S. Business Administration, major in Accounting, University of the East; Certified Public Accountant
Superpower: Strategic thinking
Claim to Fame: Awarded as the Best Meat Processing Plant in the Philippines in 2004 and 2005 by the National Meat Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture
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Sidekick: STRC (746-0334 or 746-5188, lanie.s@strc-online.com)

HARDWARE
Wesley Ngo, 43
Astech Pengson, Mandaluyong City

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Training: BS Management Engineering, Ateneo de Manila University; Asian Institute of Management Top Management Program
Superpowers: Integrity, humility, hard work, commitment, the company as family, teamwork "Sama-sama, Kayang-kaya"
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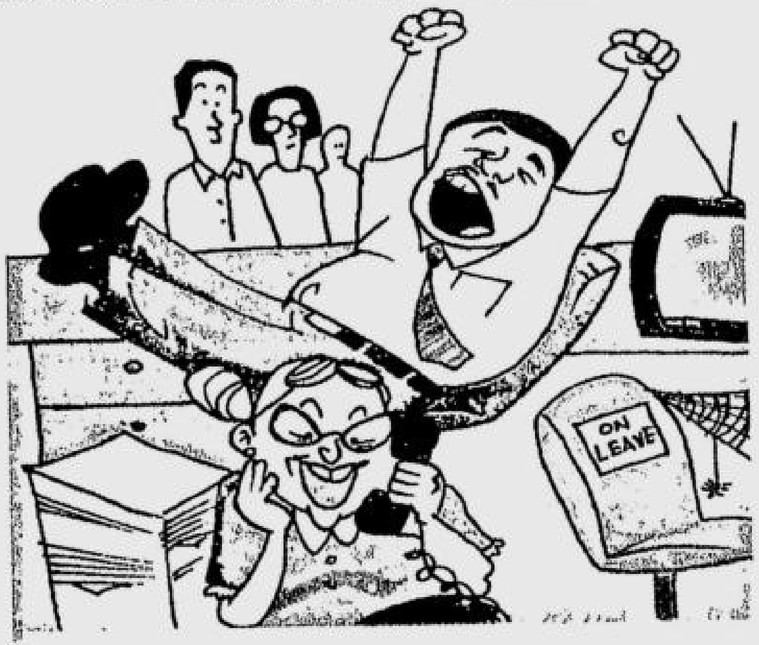

Under gov't rationalization, lazy employees will remain

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

ALL INEPT, LAZY AND ABSENTEE government employees will be spared from President Macapagal-Arroyo's directive to streamline the bureaucracy estimated to cost P10 billion in retirement packages.

Budget Undersecretary Laura Pascua says that a bureaucrat's aptitude or performance would not be a factor in the on-going rationalization program because the review would only focus on the relevance of their respective positions.

"It is a function-based approach so that there is no favoritism. It will be based on a review of functions that are redundant, duplicative and no longer needed in the bureaucracy to be able to enhance operations and strengthen functions," Pascua says.

"So as long as their current posts are not considered superfluous or redundant, government employees who are lazy or absentees will be retained. Their performance will be covered by another government review program," says Pascua who did not cite specific programs meant to cull bureaucrats that perform below par.

President Arroyo signed last October, Executive Order No. 366 mandating a strategic review of the operations and organization of the executive branch (including state corporations, task forces and councils) to improve government's service delivery and productivity.

The President's order had raised public expectations that the government would finally trim down its 1.2 million-strong

UNDER/B3-2

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McDo owner voices concern over rising cost of electricity

NOT A FEW BUSINESSMEN ARE OPTIMISTIC about the country's economic outlook this year. Buoyed by the sudden strength of the peso, hopes are indeed high that the Philippines will do better this year.

They are, however, concerned about the high cost of electricity which a businessman says currently eats up a disproportionate slice of companies overhead.

George T. Yang, chair of Golden Arches Development Corp. (GADC) which holds the local franchise for fast-food giant McDonald's restaurant, fears that if the government will not address the high cost of electricity in the country, this alone would negate all the other economic gains made that will bail us out of economic stagnation. Affordable power, he says, can do a lot to further spur investments. The high cost of electricity in the Philippines is second only to Japan in Asia.

"Electricity cost is way too high compared to other countries and it eats up a disproportionate chunk of expenses among local companies," Yang says, qualifying that he is however highly optimistic of the country's ability to rise above economic challenges.

"Political noises would have died down this year and people would want to try new things. So giving constitutional amendments a chance, buoys up confidence," he says.

According to Yang, business wants stability.

While the strength of the peso is a big factor for stability, the high cost of electricity remains a disincentive to investments, he says, adding that another sign that investments are just waiting for the right

MC DO/ B3-3

Under gov't rationalization, lazy employees will remain

From page B3-1

bureaucracy and throw out government employees who do not perform their functions or report for work only on pay days.

Among the government posts that will be abolished are those which do not produce the desired outcomes; are irrelevant and redundant; those that compete directly with private entities, and those that have been devolved to local government units.

Contrary to the public's expectations, Pascua says that the rationalization program will not geared towards improving the government's fiscal position.

"The objective is not to reduce the deficit. The bottom line of the program is to improve operations and efficiency in bureaucracy," says Pascua.

Pascua says the rationalization program was voluntary as it gives affected employees two options—agree to transfer to frontline agencies such as schools, hospitals and regulatory bodies such as the Land Transportation Office; or accept a compensation package.

The DBM has allocated P10 billion for the rationalization program in the proposed 2006 budget.

The DBM has so far implemented the rationalization program in the Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC) and the Civil Service Commission and the feedback has so far been positive.

The TLRC reported that its workforce has gone down to 161 employees from 699 and its operating costs have shrunk to P121 million from P250 million (salaries dropped from P73 million to P25 million). It paid P65 million in compensation packages to employees who opted to retire.

"We are currently processing 14 agencies and 6 corporations. We expect the rest of the 70 percent of the executive branch to submit their plans within this semester," Pascua says.

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Food firm to support improved nutrition program

KRAFT FOOD PHILIPPINES INC., has expressed its support to the Philippine Association of Nutrition's (PAN) plan to curb malnutrition through proper food fortification and an intensified implementation of an effective home and barangay nutrition across the nation.

"Kraft recognizes the importance of healthy living. This is anchored on the idea that of all the influences affecting our health and well-being, it is the food we eat and the physical activity we engage that are basic and so essential," Kraft Foods Philippines president Marivic Tiongson said in a speech during PAN's annual gathering.

PAN nutrition advocates have also called on local government officials and concerned agencies to intensify and sustain implementation efforts on nutritional improvement at the barangay level where malnutrition program implementation, nutritional improvement has been slow among Filipino households, particularly among infants and young children, pregnant and lactating women. Widespread malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies remain to be a big challenge in the country.

In 2003, a PAN study showed there are 57 out of 100 households that are still below 100 percent of their dietary energy requirement; 28 out of 100 children aged 0-5 years are underweight while 30 out of 100 aged 0-5 years are underheight due to chronic malnutrition; and five to six children in every 100 are wasted in body due to severe malnutrition. The present economic situation further aggravates the malnutrition problem with about 28 million Filipinos unable to buy food to meet their nutritional requirements and other basic needs.

Overweight and obesity are also prevalent in the country affecting a significant proportion of children, adolescents and adults, which predispose them to certain nutrition and health risks. This is evident in the rising trend in the prevalence of diseases of the heart and the vascular system.

YANG

McDo owner voices concern over rising electricity costs

From page B3-2

time to come in is the vibrant local tourism industry.

"Tourism is up, and there are great opportunities." Beaches in the Philippines are more beautiful than those in Bali or in Phuket. The growth in tourism also means more investments," he says.

Aside from the exorbitant power cost in the country, the government should likewise contain peace and order in 2006. Yang, however, believes that the government priority should be lower power costs. The government is currently undertaking the privatization of the National Power Corp. to allow competition by letting private firms run the local power industry.

Yang's position is similar to the one taken by various local trade groups and foreign chambers in calling for the lowering of power rates. The Joint Foreign Chambers (JFC), which is composed mainly of the American Chamber if Commerce of the Philippines Inc., the Australian-New Zealand Chamber Commerce of the Philippines Inc., the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc., the Korean Chamber of Commerce & Industry of the Philippines Inc., and the Philippine Association of Multinational Companies Regional Headquarters Inc., has issues a statement recently expressing concern over the continuing rise of electricity costs in the country.

"The cost of power, which is largely a determining factor of business undertakings anywhere in the world, affects the influx of foreign investors and their decisions on when and where to set up their businesses," according to the group.

A recent survey conducted by state power holding firm Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) among 15 selected Asian countries, the Philippines emerged in the top five in terms of electricity rates.

The data show the prevailing cost in electricity is one of the major reasons potential foreign investors are cautious in locating their businesses in the country, according to JFC.

Existing foreign investors are likewise hesitant to expand their operations and, worse, may even consider bringing their businesses to neighboring Asian countries where electricity rates are much lower.

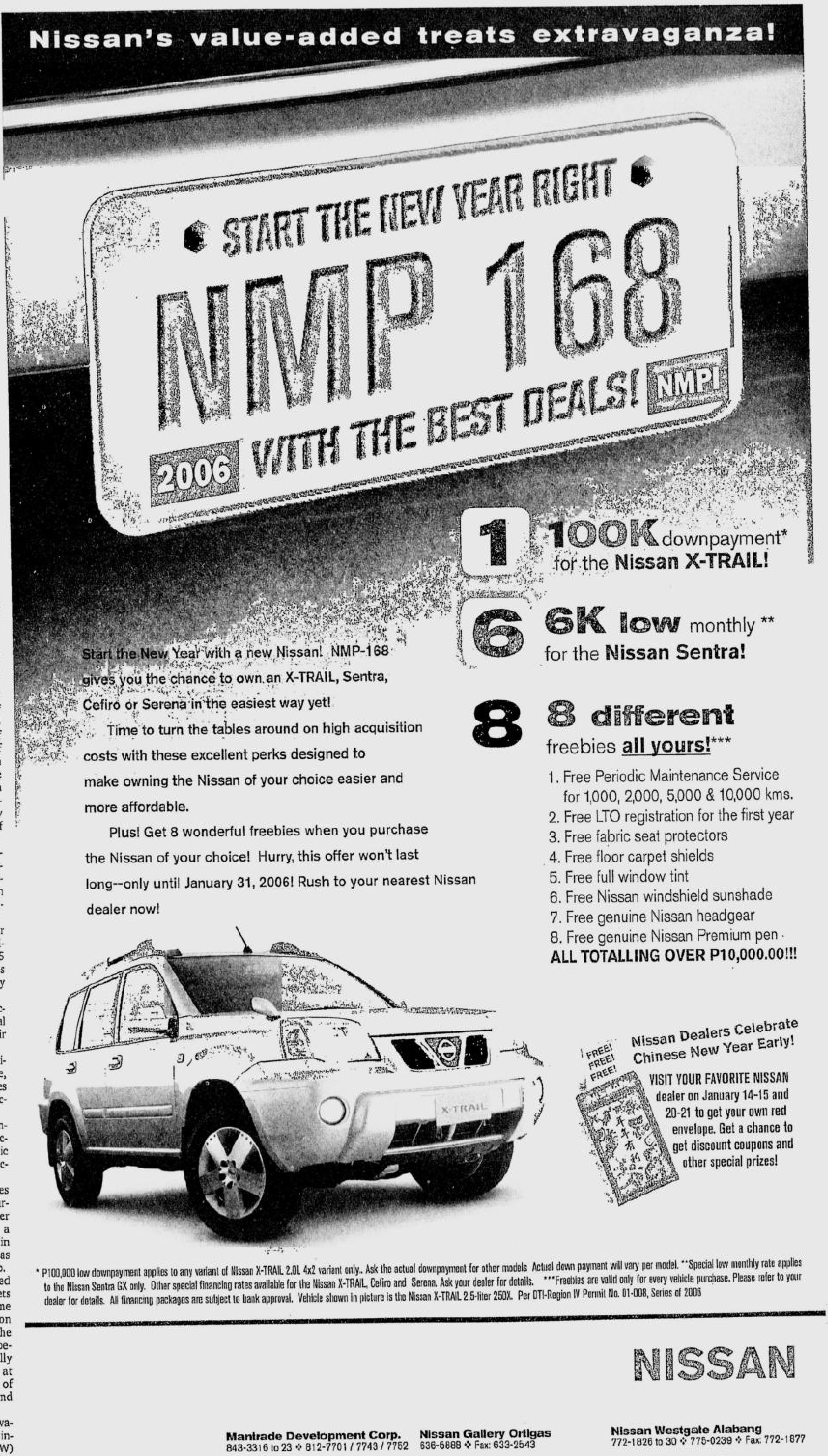
The JFC has proposed the early implementation of the "open-access" scheme or the electricity spot market as envisioned in "Republic Act No. 9136, otherwise known as the Electricity Power Industry Reform Act (Epira).

"The said scheme ensures and promotes competition in the energy industry, encourages market development and customer choice. Once successfully implemented, a lower power cost is foreseen, as reduction in Total Delivery Cost is expected to display as much as 40 percent," according to the group.

The group, however, stated the continued delay in the privatization of power assets hamper the start of the open access scheme for electricity. Due to a provision in Section 31 of the Epira, the implementation of the open-access scheme that is targeted to begin on July 1, 2006 may not be fully achieved. In Section 31, its states that at least 70 percent of the total capacity of Napocor's generating assets in Luzon and Visayas must be privatized.

To date, however, PSALM has only privatized six generating plants with a total installed capacity of 608.5 megawatts (MW) amounting to $567 million, which roughly translates to 11 percent of Napocor's total generation capacity, already including the sale of the high-capacity Masinloc coal plant.

If the sale of Masinloc is not finalized, this percentage will even go lower, far from satisfying the 70 percent requirement stated in the Epira.



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Foreign banks are not attracting top lady execs

LONDON—INVESTMENT BANKS could find themselves scrambling for top graduate talent in as little as a decade if they don't ditch the macho behavior and make banking careers more attractive to high-flying women.

Another sexism suit—this time a $1.4 billion sex discrimination case against Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein by six women complaining of prostitutes and strippers—has hit the headlines.

The accusations that female bankers are harassed, belittled by male colleagues, excluded from client events and passed over for promotion are not new. But they should be ringing alarm bells when cast against the trend in university graduates.

Many investment banks are taking action because they realize that women now make up at least 50 percent of graduates with higher education and the trend is heading upward. Another trend to take note of is the number of women executives who have smashed the glass ceiling and no longer accept second best.

Pascale Alvanitakis-Guely, a managing director at top US investment bank Lehman Brothers, said the result of these trends is that banks will suffer if they don't find better ways to attract and keep women employees.

"More than 50 percent of graduates in this country are women and in 10 years time some statistics suggest that if the trend continues, women will be in the majority, say 60-65 percent," Alvanitakis-Guely said.

Glenda Stone, whose company Aurora promotes women's workplace interests, said the overall perception of banking is that it is still an old boys' club.

But she said top women executives have become so well-educated, experienced and in demand that they can command their own terms and don't have to accept anything that even smells like a grudging invitation to the members' lounge.

"Women have more choice now. There are highly educated women in finance. If the culture doesn't suit them they can move on," said Stone, whose company runs: Where Women Want to Work, a website for women to research careers and employers.

Even common parlance about banking has a macho tone.

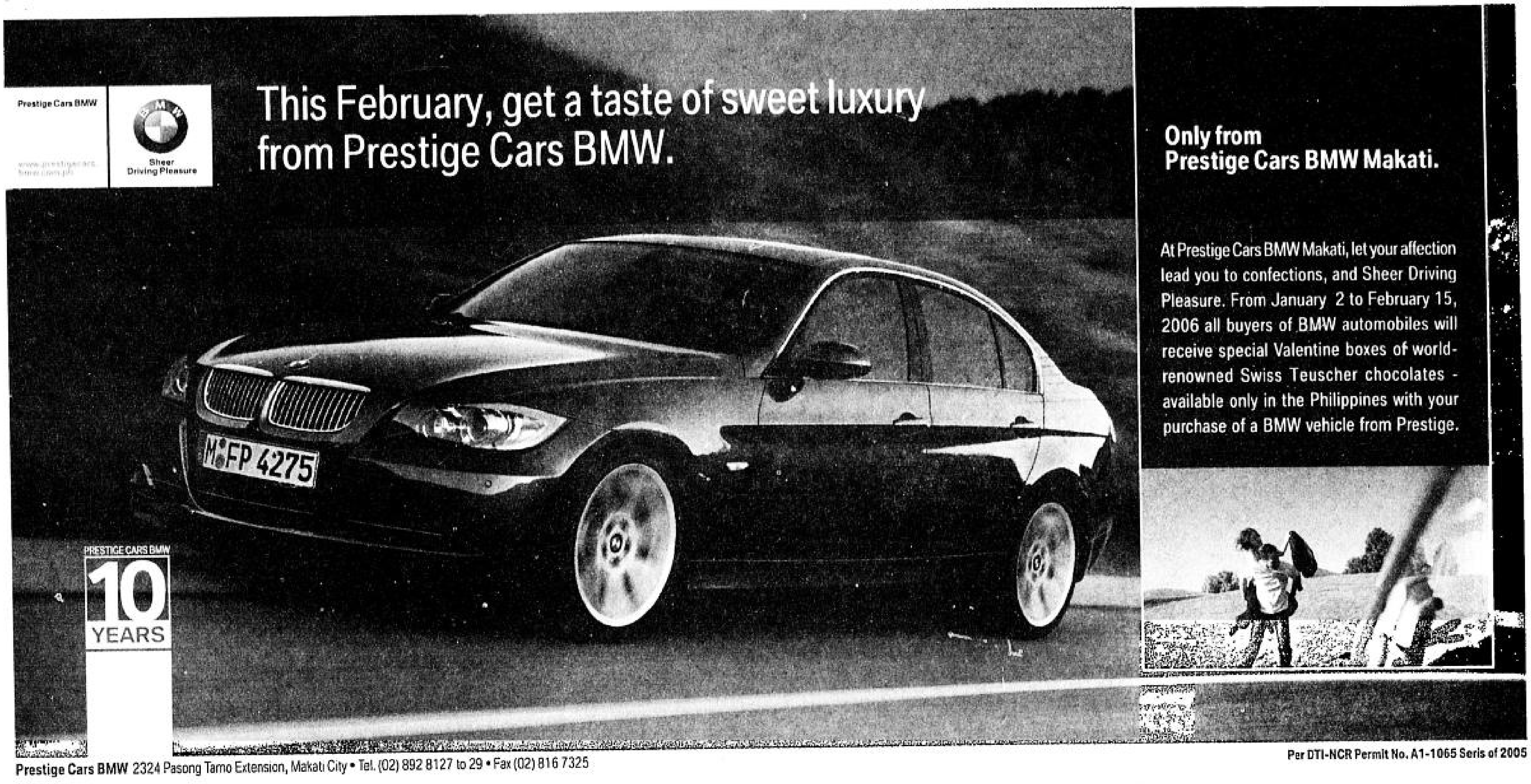
Successful male bankers have been nicknamed "masters of the universe" or "big swinging dicks," while hard-driving women make do with labels such as "ball-breaker" or "ice maiden." Dresdner would not comment on the case it is contesting and many banks are making an effort to crack down on offensive behaviour and introduce programmes to attract and retain women.

Morgan Stanley fired four employees recently after they accompanied at least one client to a strip dancing club. It and other banks such as Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and Lehman Brothers operate networks and mentoring programmes for female staff.

Industry-wide women's networks have also sprung up in the City of London financial hub, including organizations such as Women in Banking and Finance and The City Women's Club.

"We see how much work is being done to attract women, but working on the industry's image should be the next big thing for any recruitment department," said Pandora Omaset, chair of Women in Banking and Finance, who works at JP Morgan Chase.

Despite these efforts women say the banking world still suffers from a dearth of opportunities to network, plan careers or just feel like they belong. *Reuters*



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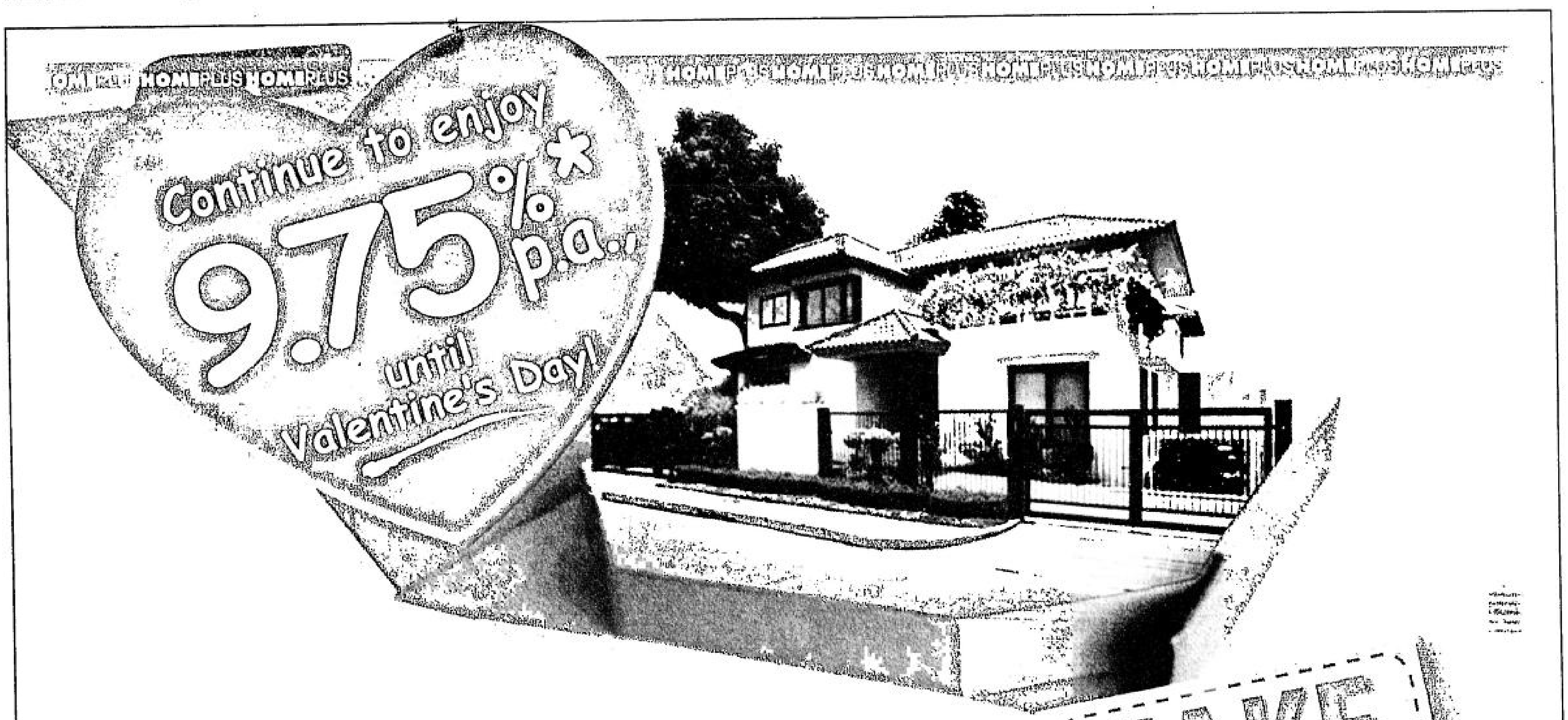

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Are Otoniel Gonzaga and Lea Salonga an odd couple?

LEA sings "On My Own" at Merk's Bar Bistro presscon: No more singing after the baby arrives.

By Amadís Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

AND SO THE MUSICAL BUZZ THESE days is the upcoming concert of operatic tenor Otoniel Gonzaga, a major performer on the international concert scene, and Lea Salonga, the celebrated singing actress.

This will be held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines on Jan. 25, with Julian Quirit conducting the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra.

Guest performers include our foremost soprano Rachelle Gerodias (Italy-bound and will join the Thomasian cast of "Le Nozze di Figaro" in a farewell performance at the CCP on Jan. 22), and mean baritone Noel Azcona.

Most music lovers are excited about the event, but there are a few who look at the pairing of two outstanding but different talents askance. Aren't they, they ask, a musical odd couple?

The question was put to the panel of musical stars, headed by Salonga (five months pregnant) herself, at a recent press conference at Merk's Bar Bistro in Greenbelt, Makati.

"This has been done before," noted Salonga. "There's Pavarotti and Friends. There have been musical marriages. You just pick the right material, the right people... So keep an open mind. You never know what the music will be until you hear it. But there might have to be vocal adjustments."

OTONIEL Gonzaga in action in a European opera

SOPRANO Rachelle Gerodias, Lea Salonga and conductor Julian Quirit. He says conducting Salonga and Gonzaga is like driving a Ferrari and Rolls Royce for the first time.

Rolando Gonzaga, representing his father Otoniel (who is still performing in Canada), said that "this is a celebration of music, not opera or Broadway. I just ignore it [these misgivings]. I think it's a little close-minded to think that way. I'm excited about the concert. I think it's going to be beautiful."

Music director Quirit declared that "music is music." Speaking metaphorically, he likened himself to a "driver" of a *calesa* who is now driving a Rolls-Royce (presumably Gonzaga) and a Ferrari (Salonga, no doubt).

"I will drive these wonderful people to... [their destination,]" he added.

Soprano Gerodias said that with this concert, "you will be able to tell the difference in their styles. One is not superior to the other, just different. It will be educational, a mix of opera and Broadway."

So there. That's the rejoinder to you, doubting Thomases.

National Artist race heats up

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

THE COUNCIL OF PEERS EARLY THIS YEAR had its hands full when it formally convened to decide on the most deserving nominees for National Artist honors.

The visual arts, as expected, was a fiercely contested battlefield, with more than a dozen nominees. There were the perennials—Diosdado Lorenzo, Larry Alcala, Francisco V. Coching—who might ultimately have to be dropped from the list if the revised ruling on posthumous honors (artists who passed away more than 10 years ago would no longer be eligible) were to be enforced to the letter.

Alcuaz and Malang have been nominated

The battle was more intense among those who were still alive and kicking—and in fighting form. Such renowned sculptors as Ed Castrillo and Ramon Orlina, painters like Bencab, Araceli Limcaco-Dans, Raul Isidro, Charito Bitanga, and even perhaps Angel Cacnio were at center stage.

Castrillo, who was reportedly in sick bay, had the full backing of the Art Association of the Philippines, which nominated him. Orlina had the support of another artists' foundation, and Dans was likewise a strong contender, evident in the coffee-table book that documented her life and times.

Two more names were most likely to emerge in the deliberations: Federico Alcuaz and Malang.

Alcuaz had long been a nominee and a recently published tome on the artist further sealed his credentials. Malang, who is openly adversarial in his stance on the selection process, would most likely find himself nominated by his staunchest supporters.

But, given the prevailing temper and taste of the jurors who made up the Council of Peers—those who were unduly picked by fate (drawing of lots) and who would be tasked to represent their peers in the crucial closed-door deliberations (they had to be elected by their peers)—those most likely to become National Artists would have to be kept in utmost secrecy until the moment of reckoning.

Cinco comes to his own

At long last, a Filipino artist is reaping what he has sown.

Though a virtual newcomer on the art scene, Florence Cinco emerged as a double winner in the 2005 Art Association of the Philippines (AAP) Annual. His work, "One," was awarded first prize in the mixed-media category, beating nearly a hundred pieces that were submitted. His entry "Nirguna Force" was honorable mention in an equally competitive sculpture category.

Cinco, who hails from Calbayog City in Western Samar, seriously pursued art only during the last couple of years, specializing in relief paintings from recycled materials such as brass and iron, and a variety of nuts and bolts salvaged from junk shops.

A representative work in mixed media he entered in the 2004 Metrobank Art Competition won first prize, a feat that spurred him to become a full-time artist.

Early last year, Cinco mounted his first solo show at The Big & Small Art Co. Here, his style using recycled mixed media became even more distinctive, though many of the pieces were admittedly small, even minuscule, considering the artist's expansive treatment of his cosmic universe.

A loyal disciple of Hare Krishna, Cinco practices what his group preaches. He subscribes to a strict vegetarian diet, does yoga daily, and adheres to a spiritual lifestyle while in pursuit of artistic ends.

Cinco worked on his AAP entry to articulate his thoughts on the essence of oneness, a holistic belief in the union of body, mind and spirit. The image of a seemingly infinitesimal gray grid laced with circular knobs easily grabs one's attention. On closer viewing, the technique of multiplicity in the

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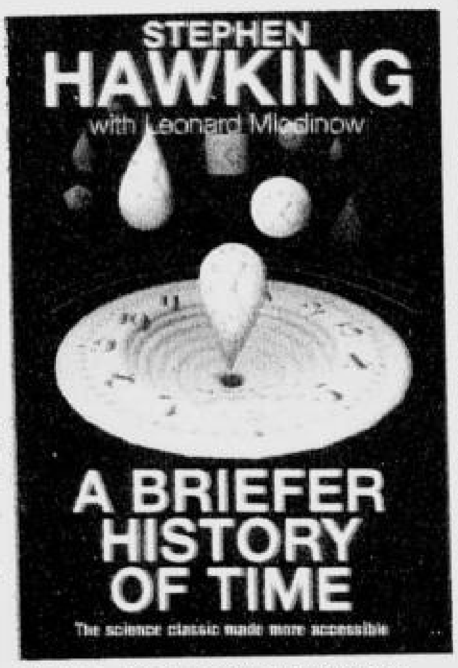
Reading list

A TRUE TALE OF MATHEMATICS, MYSTICISM, AND THE QUEST TO UNDERSTAND THE UNIVERSE
DESCARTES' SECRET NOTEBOOK
AMIR D. ACZEL

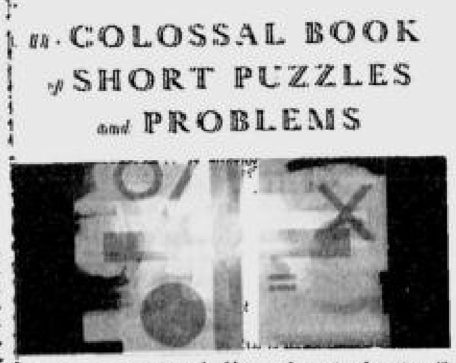
"DESCARTES' SECRET NOTEBOOK" BY Amir D. Aczel is a nonfiction book about the great philosopher's alleged secret notebook. Gottfried Leibniz, a great mathematician, had reportedly searched for the notebook and found it in the possession of Claude Clerselier. But Leibniz was allowed to copy only a couple of pages, which, amazingly, he deciphered on the spot. His hastily scribbled notes are all we have today of Descartes' notebook.


STEPHEN HAWKING
with Leonard Mlodinow
A BRIEFER HISTORY OF TIME
The science classic made more accessible

"A Briefer History of Time" by Stephen Hawking is a friendlier version of Hawking's worldwide bestseller "A Brief History of Time," a landmark in scientific literature. In the new book, the author makes scientific concepts such as relativity and quantum theory more accessible to nonscientists.

THOMAS HOVING
MASTER PIECES

In **"Masterpieces: The Curator's Game,"** Thomas Hoving introduces us to the challenge and fun of recognizing art by adapting an imaginative exercise among curators: identifying details of larger museum masterpieces. In this book, 215 visual details—each accompanied by a brief verbal clue—require readers to examine art with a curator's eye. Some details are instantly recognizable, while others will send readers hunting from which paintings were they derived. In the end, readers will be rewarded with a familiarity of the great works. The key is looking very carefully.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MARTIN GARDNER

"The Colossal Book of Short Puzzles and Problems" gathers the columns for over 25 years of Martin Gardner in the Scientific American. The columns challenged thousands of readers by distilling complicated mathematical concepts into puzzles that enticed both novices and experts. Now for the first time, Gardner's puzzles are gathered in book form. Arranged by subject (algebra, geometry, logic, wordplay) from easiest to hardest, this is an indispensable book to all those who enjoy a good brainteaser.

The books are available at National Book Store.

Ramirez at Waterfront, social realists at UP, Malang at West, Cosio et al at Avellana

VISUAL ARTS

GALERIE Y presents Fred Ramirez's "Shadows in Red" at the lobby of the Waterfront Hotel and Casino, Lahug, Cebu City. Ramirez specializes in abstracts and is known for his "Cosmic" series, which depicts the energies of the cosmos and his vision of the universe. The exhibit runs until Jan. 22.

SOCIAL realists will mount an exhibit of graphic designs, "Isyu," at the Faculty Center of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, QC, Jan. 16-28. The works to be exhibited are mostly editorial cartoons done by Neil Doloricon, Benjo Laygo and José Tence Ruiz, collected through years of working with various dailies. Other artists are Boy Dominguez, Ed Coronel, Egai Fernandez, Biboy Delotavo, Adi Baens Santos, Ato Habulan and Ed Manalo.

MALANG is celebrating his 78th birthday with an art exhibit at the Art Center of SM Megamall on Jan. 20. The show is curated by West Gallery.

AVELLANA Art Gallery kicks off the new year with three separate exhibits that open today. In "One Third," Allan Cosio romances the endless seasonal shifts in a meditative abstract mood which evokes the serenity of a Chinese print. Ferdinand Doctolero's "Liwaliw: Glance on Urban Colors" portrays sweeping panoramas of urban landscape characterized by nervous energy and exuberant colors. Jesus Bermudez's "Flowers Are Forever," captures the transience of natural objects in wood carvings that have a deep affiliation with folkloric art. The newly renovated gallery opens at 10 a.m. There will be a reception with the artists at 6:30 p.m. Avellana Art Gallery is at A-19, 2680 F.B. Harrison St., Pasay City (fronting Gideon Academy). Call 8338357.

WEST Gallery presents the group show "Works Under the Sun," Jan. 17-Feb. 4. The exhibit features the new works in acrylic and a collaborative mixed-media installation by Aba Lluch Dalena, Patrick de Veyra, Jemina Reyes, Via Garcellano Lobrin and Cynthia Alexander. West Gallery, now part of the new Mary Santos Artcade, is at 48 West Ave., QC. Call 4110336/9221.

ARTIST-AUTHOR Tam P. Austria greets the Tanay artists during the launch of "Mga Kulay ng Tanay 2006 Calendar" in honor of the late Martin Catolos. Austria, a founder and former president of the Tanay Artists' Group, is welcomed by organizers of the Kah Ante Workshop. Also in photo: Mary Divine Austria, Nini Arabit, Modesto Catolos, Arrot Catolos, Mercedes Timtiman, Cris Reyes and Rey Gomez.

AUSTRALIAN Mark Shellshear presents "A Journey through Colors and Impressions," at Ilustrado Restaurant across the courtyard of Silahis Center, 744 Gen. Luna St., Intramuros, Manila. Shellshear presents his colorful impressions on canvas depicting his observations on Philippine market scenes. Call 5272113.

THE BIG & Small Art Co. is presenting a one-man exhibit by Pedro Garcia II until tomorrow. With a new palette of colors, each piece by Garcia is a mirage of subdued tones and subliminal shading. Call 6877425.

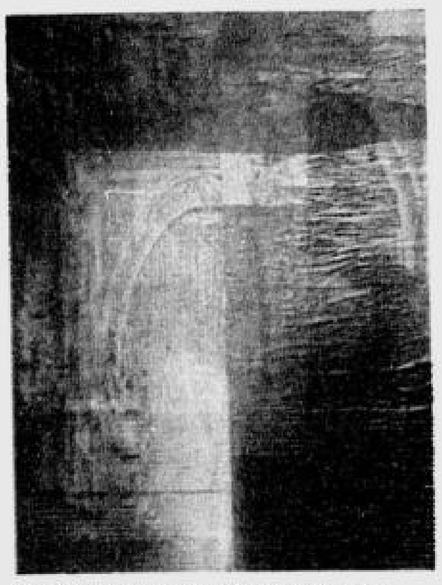
FERNANDO Sena presents an exhibit of his landscapes and still lifes until Jan. 21, at the Art Gallery of the Philippine Heart Center, East Avenue, QC.

THE FERNANDO B. Sena Art Workshop presents a group exhibit until Jan. 26, at the Triumph Building (between Hi-Tops Supermarket and International Exchange Bank, Quezon Ave., QC). Participating artists are Gigi Lim, Solomon Lalo, Beth Concepcion, Mila Rosales, Celine Constante, Ian Lim, Crisanta de Guzman, Barbi Young, Evelyn Martinez, Suzette Yu, Emerlinda Pallatao and Camille Chua.

"JAVADELIC," an exhibit by Judy Razon and Digo Ricio, features digital photographs inspired by coffee and travel. The exhibit runs until Feb. 14, at the Penguin Café and Gallery, 604 Remedios St. cor. J. Bocobo St., near Remedios Circle, Malate.

E.R. TAGLE presents his recent works in "Celebration of Life," featuring the Mother and Child and other figurative works. The exhibit opens on Jan. 16, 5 p.m., at the 5/L Walter Mart, Arnaiz cor. Chino Roces Aves., Makati. Call 8112432, 8996358 or 0927-5522288.

THE ALCOVE Photo Gallery presents "The Turn of the Century: Filipinas Circa 1890-1910." The exhibit features a collection of photographs that strikingly capture life in many aspects during the colonial period and the beginning of the Philippine Republic. The exhibit will run Jan. 17-31. Alcove is in Filipinas Heritage Library, Makati Avenue. The photographs are taken from the Retrato Photo Gallery; copies for sale. Call 8921801.



BENJIE Cabangis presents his new abstracts and collages in "New Paintings and a Selection of Small Collages" at Mag:Net Gallery ABS, The Loop, ELJ Communications Center, Lopez St., QC, Jan. 17-28. Above is "Time Frame," acrylic collage.

Art that's forever young

By Constantino C. Tejero

ALLAN COSIO IS ONE OF THE most important artists of his generation (not only is he into painting but also into sculpture and tapestry), yet he is not about to rest on his laurels. That is, he appears loath to repeat himself.

Active on the art scene since the mid-1970s, Cosio is still producing genre pieces such as portraits, nudes and landscapes. Already in his mid-60s, he is still exploring the basics of line and structure, form and color. Yet every exhibit of his is characterized by newness.

Cosio has straddled art movements and styles from Op Art to Abstract Expressionism, from representational to illusionist. A clear polarity is his portraiture and abstraction.

In a recent exhibit, the classic nude became new with his distortion of the figure and drenching it with a preponderance of red until the pieces turned expressionistic. Now in his rendering of landscape (a continuation of his exploration a few years ago), he is conjuring a whole generation of Impressionists and some Postimpressionists.

Cosio's large-scale pieces in acrylic on canvas (mostly 5 ft x 8 ft), in an exhibit simply titled "Paintings," were recently displayed at Le Soufflé on Amorsolo Drive, Rockwell Center, Makati City.

The pieces have poetic lines for titles: "Lovely Flowers, Pray," "Now in Joy and Sorrow," "Softly Sighs the Voice of Evening," "Ne'er Could There Be," "When Joyous Thoughts."

While Cosio's technique in his previous landscapes resembled Gustav Klimt's rendering of the landscapes of his lakeside vacation place—the canvas clogged with points of light and dots of color, flattened figures, and without perspective—this time the dots occupy only the sides and borders of the canvas, thus allowing some perspective and showing the spatial relation of sky and blossoms.

While before Cosio's leaves, trees, flowers, river or snow burst in a rich tapestry of brilliant hues, now he has limited his color harmonies in each piece.

In the warm harmony of "Lovely Flowers, Pray," a plane of brilliant red is dotted with yellow-ochre, making the whole look like Chinese silk with floral prints.

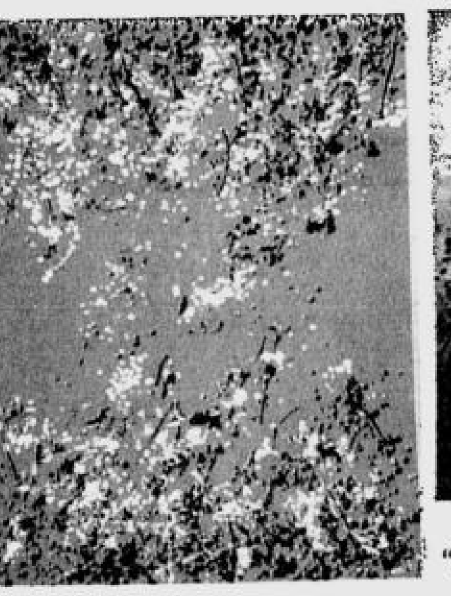
In "Now in Joy and Sorrow," the sky is a reddish wash against which are dotted the multicolor berries or flowerets of a bush, making it appear like watercolor on paper.

But often, the canvas is just washed with a cool harmony then dotted with a darker tonality of these same colors, rendering the piece as near-monochrome.

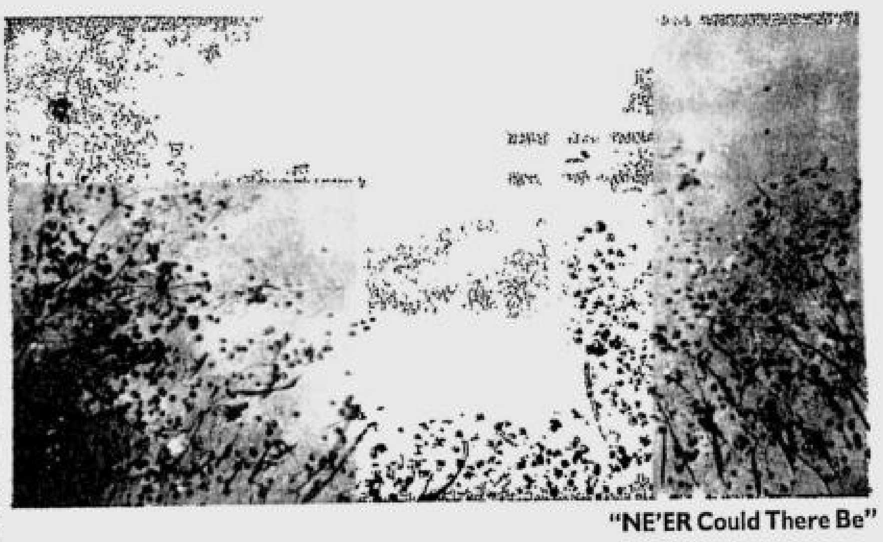
While in Cosio's previous landscapes the dense application of hues betrayed an expressionistic tendency peeking out of an impressionistic veneer, here in these new landscapes the color planes and washes demonstrate a lightness of touch.

Finally, while in his previous landscapes Cosio obviously used Western technique (the repeated strokes of Monet, the pointillism of Signac, the dots-clogged canvas of Klimt, the painterly energy of Van Gogh)—now his landscapes clearly allude to Oriental painting.

This is art that looks young, therefore, joyous. The artist may render a pile of snow and we'd still be seeing springtime.



"LOVELY Flowers, Pray"



"NE'ER Could There Be"

National Artist race heats up

From page C1

image pulls off visual interjections, largely with the help of drippings coming from a middle bolt.

Though its attempt to elicit visual pun is contrived, the painting is, however, redeemed by its audacious, truly inventive spirit and especially by its resonant and deeply felt philosophical discourse.

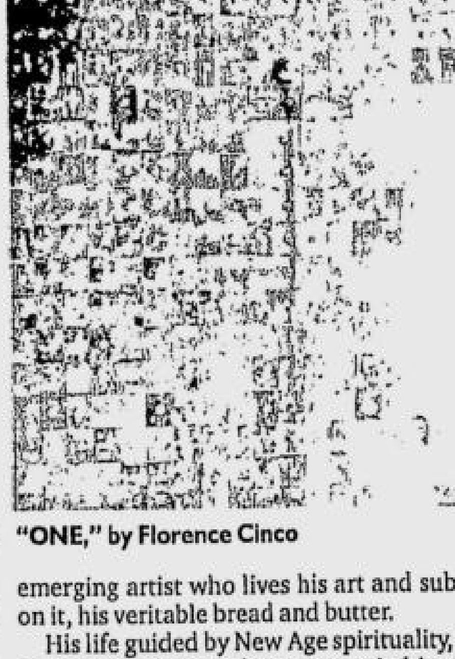
In the sculpture category, where judging was perhaps not at par with that in mixed-media, Cinco had a trio of identical free-standing, iron-clad figures strung and conjoined in a circle. Even more eye-catching than the top winners in this category, the enigmatic sculpture had its lids empty and its legs firm on the ground.

The work was, like Cinco's mixed media entry, witty and inventive, and perhaps missed only a crucial point to get to the Top 3.

Coincidentally Cinco held his second solo show, "Microvita," on Boracay. He was invited by his sponsor, the Planet Gallery and Funiture Shop, to stay for the duration of the show.

With a number of commissions to be completed in the resort, Cinco is the portrait of the emerging artist who lives his art and subsists on it, his veritable bread and butter.

His life guided by New Age spirituality, Cinco is obviously in no hurry to attain his goals, and that accounts for his well-articulated images of the universe.



"ONE," by Florence Cinco

E-mail author at gdormiendo@yahoo.com

Gallery holds art contest

ENTRY FORMS FOR THE 2006 painting competition sponsored by Galerie Andrea are now available at its main office in Intramuros, Manila, and its branch at The Gallery, Creekside, Makati City.

The competition is one of the activities lined up by the gallery to mark its 20th anniversary this year, said steering committee chair Karen Gandamra.

All Filipino citizens and foreign nationals who are permanent residents of the Philippines aged 15 onward may join the competition, which has two categories—open and student. Those below 21 will automatically be entered in the student category.

Artists who have won major prizes in major local and international art competitions are not eligible to join.

Finalists will be chosen for each of the categories.

The grand-prize winner of the open category will receive P75,000 (inclusive of a P15,000 gift certificate from Daler-Rowney of England, Europe's leading manufacturer and distributor of professional-quality art materials and supplies). The grand-prize winner in the student category will receive P50,000 in cash and gifts.

The other finalists in the open category will receive P25,000 each, and in the student category, P15,000 each.

Senior artists and art critics will make up the board of judges.

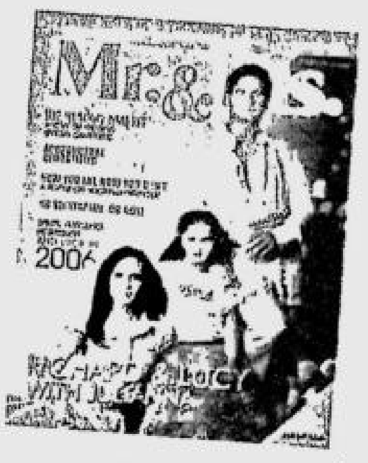
Entries are required to be in professional-quality oil, acrylic, watercolor, gouache, pastel, charcoal, ink or pencil.

"We make this requirement because one of our objectives in sponsoring this competition is to motivate local artists to use professional-quality art materials," Gandamra said.

She said many art collectors had been left with artworks that peeled, cracked, faded, or otherwise disintegrated only a few years after purchase.

For inquiries, call 5274089.

Tips on making 2006 a lucky year in Mr. & Ms



MR. & MS, "THE SUPER-MONTHLY of the Body, Mind and Spirit," celebrates the Year of the Dog with articles on positive thinking, acupuncture, vegetarianism, coconut oil and astrology.

"By reading the positions and relationships of the signs and the planets in the charts, the astrologer deduces the diseases that the subject is prone to and the probable causes of sickness," writes Jamal Abbas, a student of the esoteric, in his article, "Astrology and Health."

On acupuncture, Rodrigo Ong, a doctor of medicine who has treated athletes, sports enthusiasts and professors, notes: "There is evidence in the West that acupuncture stimulates the central nervous system and the brain. It triggers the body's healing mechanisms."

As for vegetarianism, did you know that going on a no-meat diet might cause an imbalance in the body's nutritional needs? Learn more about the topic.

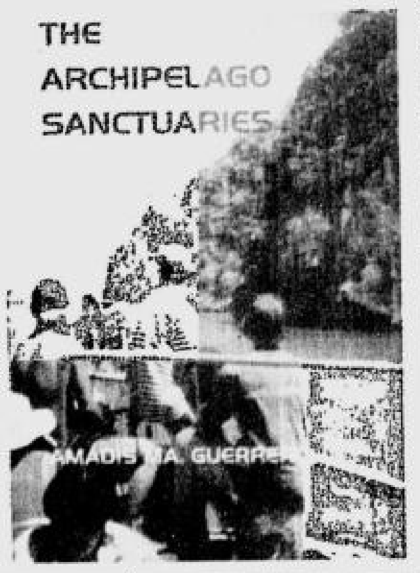
Other articles are on yoga, sensual massage, prenatal massage, actress Vina Morales' secrets to staying fit, charms and crystals, anorexia nervosa, and a bed that heals.

Cover models Richard Gomez and Lucy Torres-Gomez, with daughter Julianna, share their insights on how to create a trim physique... and how to make a relationship work.

Jaime Licauco discusses "negative spirits" that may cause financial ruin and ill health. Mariel Francisco writes about revisited past lives. Aida Sevilla Mendoza's "Mystical Motoring" column tells of a mysterious floating motorbike.

Tingting Cojuangco, reveals the origins of talismans. Alice Villadolid's "Irresistible Missionary Spirit" tells of the author's desire to serve God.

Resident psychic, Conchita Calma Ubaldo, or Madame Annie, gives some tips to bring in good luck this 2006.



AMADIS Ma. Guerrero's latest travel book, "The Archipelago Sanctuaries," will be launched Jan. 19, at the Rizal Tower, GF, Function Room Terrace, Rockwell Center, Makati City. The author focuses on the country's Protected Areas, sanctuaries, landmarks and leading resorts. Ecodestinations covered range from Sagada to Marawi.

Integrating heritage with development policy

First of two parts

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

AWARENESS AND COOPERATION ARE most important considerations when initiating a legal framework that successfully integrates architectural heritage with development policies.

All sectors, public and private, must be aware of the particular architectural heritage of the city and their joint responsibility to conserve it. They must be aware of the uniqueness of their heritage, of the benefits conservation will bring to the people and to their city.

Most important, both sectors must have the same clear picture of how the integration of the new with the old can be achieved.

Cooperation comes hand in hand with awareness. Conservation of heritage and national development are primarily for the benefit of the people. They improve the quality of life.

Therefore, to achieve them, there must be joint participation of the public and private sectors.

It does not really matter whether government or stakeholders initiate the development program. What matters is that the stakeholders are involved in the program to the point of assuming "ownership," thus assuring their commitment and participation toward the success of the program.

In many foreign examples, government-initiated programs implemented without stakeholder participation have largely been failures. Conservation programs by the City of Manila and the Intramuros Administration are perfect examples.

For an overview of the heritage that is to be conserved, we should look at its total scope. Heritage consists of tangible and intangible manifestations that express the individuality of a culture.

Tangible expressions are architecture, townscapes, cityscapes, painting, sculpture and traditional craft. Intangible expressions are music, dance, literature, cuisine and much more.

After considering the total range of the tangible and intangible, we see that cultural heritage defines the unique qualities of a people, giving them an identity that sets them apart in today's globalized world.

The architecture and urbanscapes are simply one part of the entire cultural heritage picture—the spaces where cultural activities take place. However, neither heritage nor architecture exists in a vacuum. They are part of human life.

Therefore, we should ideally plan on conserving architectural heritage, including the other tangible and intangible aspects that take place within the architectural envelope. We are conserving the total heritage picture.

Identity

What would the Philippines be without its language, music, dance, sculpture, cuisine and other facets of its culture? Its heritage is what gives the country an identity. Without it, the Philippines could easily be mistaken for any other country in the world.

To keep the Philippines standing out as unique among other cultures existing in the world today, it is therefore essential to conserve all aspects of its heritage, not only the architectural and urban, as part of a national development strategy that sees the importance of total heritage picture to establish a national image.

Conservation of heritage is essential in nation-building.

In nation-building, we are concerned with the hardware, with the measurable. We tally GNP, currency reserves, kilometers of new highways, increased electrical power supply, new airports, number of tourist arrivals, hotels, and so on.

However, to make the gains from improved hardware relevant, they must result in improving the life of the people. Which is where the software takes over.

Software is psychic, not measurable. It consists of inputs resulting in an improved quality of life—comfortable cities, vibrant entertainment, museums that excite people, festivals and other aspects that make life more pleasant for everyone. After all, what good is achieving all the hardware if life remains the same?

In most cities today, many do not like old buildings. They prefer to replace them with new structures. A popular belief exists around the globe that we must destroy the past to move forward, that the past symbolizes an era of darkness, of ignorance, poverty and oppression.

That rationale justifies the continued destruction of what remains of the fragile architectural heritage in many cities.

The new buildings built on the debris of the old are seen to be symbols of having stepped out of the Dark Ages into the 21st century. They are the shining skyscrapers of progress, but not necessarily architecture as good as what they replaced.

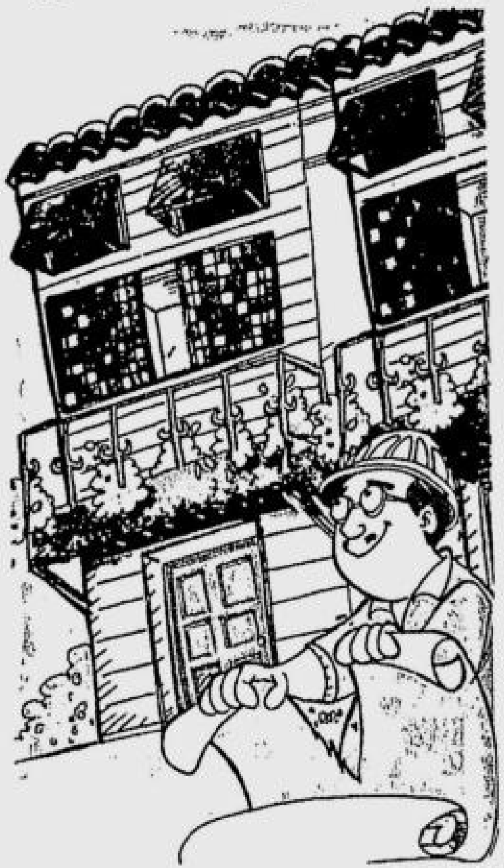


ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY MISTADES

Today people realize that skyscrapers are not really the signs of progress as once thought. Hong Kong and Singapore relentlessly built skyscraper after skyscraper over the skeletons of their heritage buildings.

After a few decades of construction, they realized that memory had been erased from their cities, that local residents were looking to revive their connections with the past, and that the special identity of their cities was close to disappearing.

To correct the situation, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore identified heritage neighborhoods, set guidelines for their conservation. It either purchased blocks of houses for conservation by the Ura or offered assistance to private property-owners who wished to conserve their houses.

The lesson to learn from Singapore is that the legislation did not focus on single, stand-alone heritage properties, but instead on conserving groups of houses or entire neighborhood settings.

Setting gives more relevance to conserving architectural heritage. It encourages a continuation of the living patterns that may have existed within the neighborhood.

To be continued

E-mail the author at afvillalon@hotmail.com

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'ONCE on This Island' returns /D4

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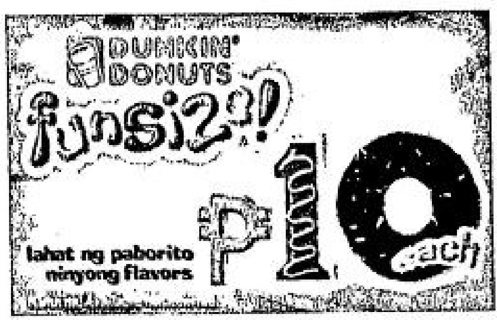

DUNKIN' DONUTS
funsize!
lahat ng paborito ninyong flavors
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Where have you gone, Juliet and Romeo?

By Gibbs Cadiz

IF IT IS TRUE, AS SONTAG ET al have put it, that camp is both the negation of feeling and the affirmation of artifice, then the Metropolitan Theater Guild's ongoing presentation of "Romeo and Juliet" at the AFP Theater might be said to outclass the nightly displays of camp in places like Club Mwah or the old Film Center, hands down.

All unintentional, of course. This is Shakespeare, after all, the Grand Pasha of high art, the performance of whose works is meant to bestow gilded seriousness to any upstart theater troupe. The Bard as a campy object? "Accursed, unhappy, wretched, hateful day!," as Juliet's mother would lament.

Well, that day has come, and what an experience it is to stagger out of the theater at the close of a reportedly P17 million production and find yourself muttering, "What was that?"

Woeful day

Met's splashy debut production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in 2004 never cued us to this woeful day. That rollicking gambol in Baz Luhrmann-Bollywood deconstruction, ingeniously directed by Ricardo Abad, took Shakespeare's most whimsical play and dressed it up in all the right places. As well as announcing the birth of an audacious new theater company, it also made Shakespeare hip and fun enough for young audiences.

"Romeo and Juliet" is resounding (and expensive) proof that hipness can only go so far. Abad's "contemporizing" of the immortal play on young love is wearisome rather than inspiring, tedious instead of rapturous, and it all comes down to the baffling decision to hack Shakespeare's words to their barest while playing up the glitzy stage effects and wuzzy pop touches.

You're off to have your spirit soar with Romeo's "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?" soliloquy? Forget it. Only the first two or three lines escape the lips of Yan Yuzon, who plays an agile but curiously inert Romeo. Other long passages have given way to brief excerpts, as if the world's greatest playwright were writing punchlines instead of dramatic poetry.

Good if such revisions resulted in language equal to or at least evocative of Shakespeare. But consider this. When Juliet's mother discovers her daughter in death-like stupor, she shrieks, "Oh me, oh my! My child!"

Shakespeare? No, the original lines are "O me, O me! My child!"—archaic but certainly

WHERE/D3

The Metropolitan Theater Guild's production of Shakespeare's play on young love is resounding (and expensive) proof that hipness can only go so far

YAN Yuzon and Ina Feleo as Romeo and Juliet

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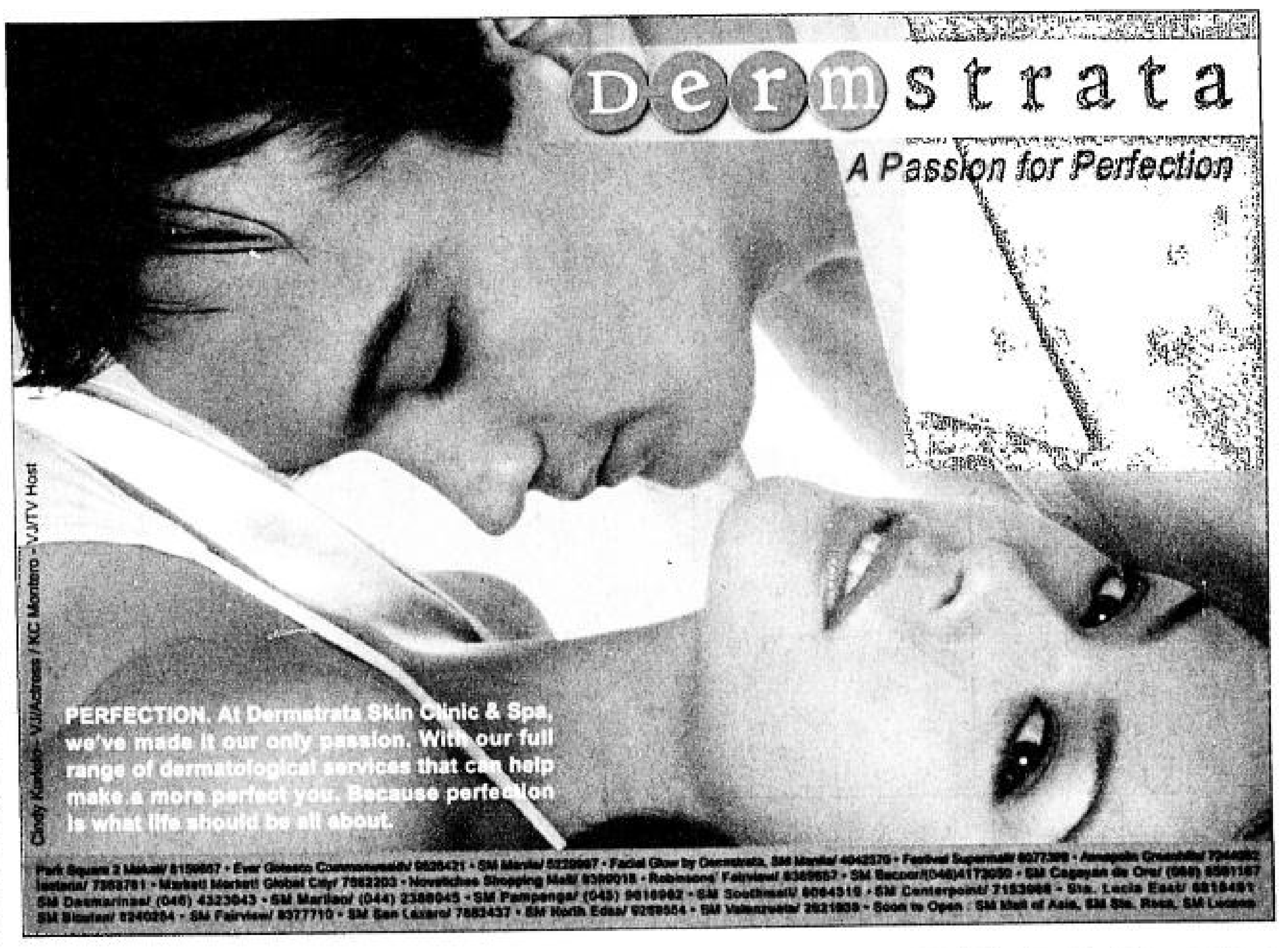

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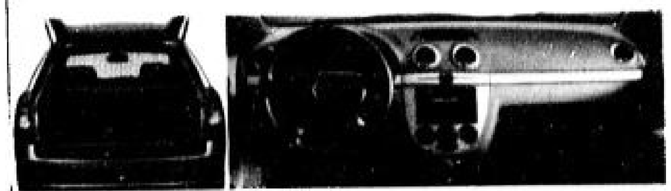
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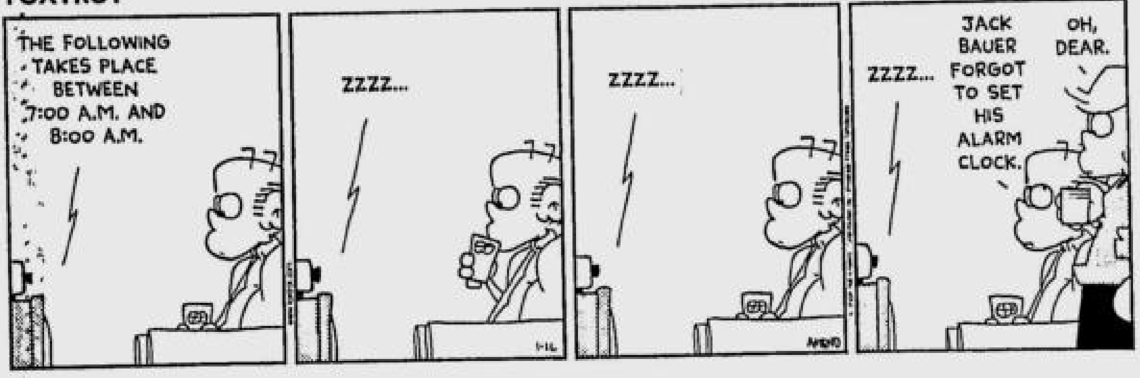
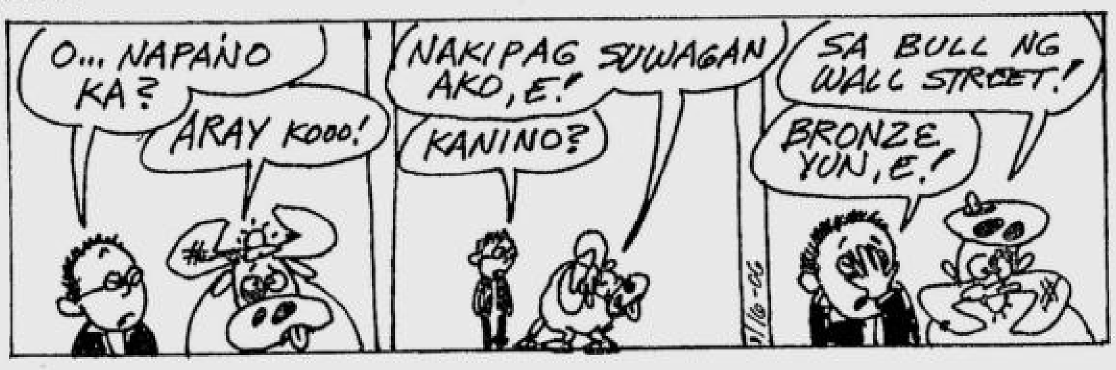
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


THE FOLLOWING TAKES PLACE BETWEEN 7:00 A.M. AND 8:00 A.M.
ZZZZ...
ZZZZ...
ZZZZ...
JACK BAUER FORGOT TO SET HIS ALARM CLOCK.
OH, DEAR.
1-16
AMEND

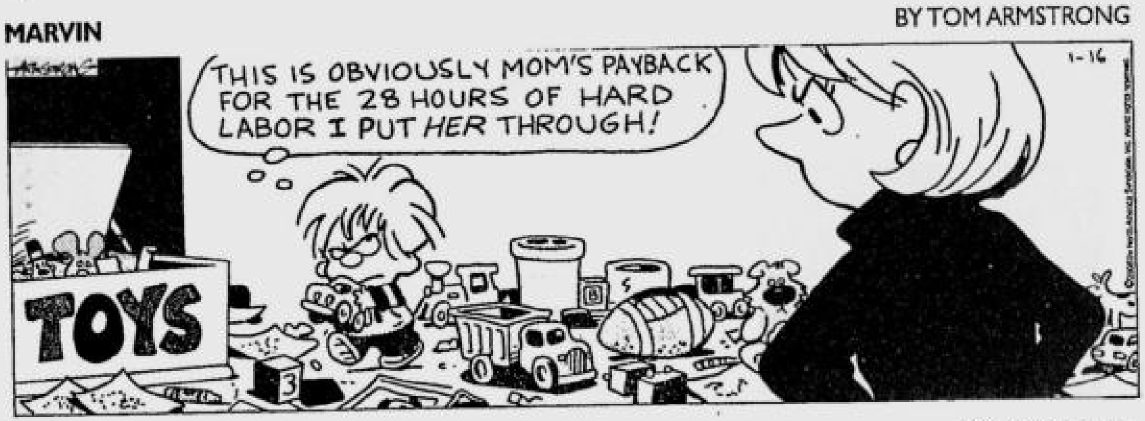
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


O... NAPANO KA?
ARAY KOOO!
NAKIPAG SUWAGAN AKO, E!
KANINO?
SA BULL NG WALL STREET!
BRONZE YUN, E!
1/16-06

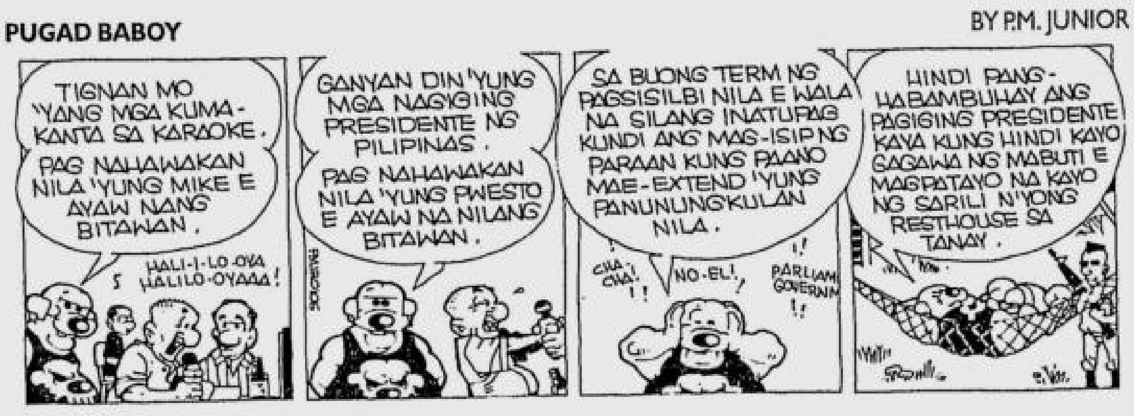
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


THIS IS OBVIOUSLY MOM'S PAYBACK FOR THE 28 HOURS OF HARD LABOR I PUT HER THROUGH!
1-16
TOYS
3

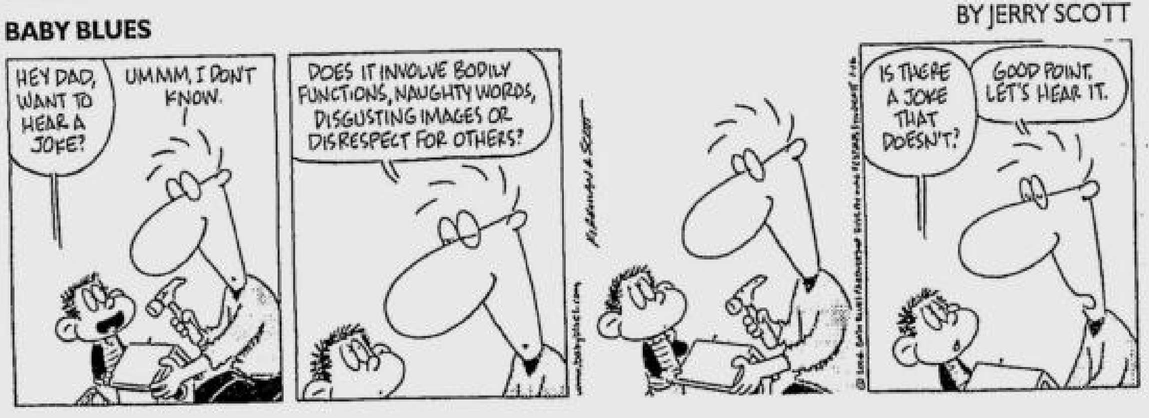
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


TIGNAN MO 'YANG MGA KUMAKANTA SA KARAOKE. PAG NAHAHAWAKAN NILA 'YUNG MIKE E AYAW NANG BITAWAN.
HALI-I-LO-OYA HALILO-OYAAA!
GANYAN DIN 'YUNG MGA NAGIGING PRESIDENTE NG PILIPINAS. PAG NAHAHAWAKAN NILA 'YUNG PWESTO E AYAW NA NILANG BITAWAN.
SA BUONG TERM NG PAGSISILBI NILA E WALA NA SILANG INATUPAG KUNDI ANG MAG-ISIP NG PARAAN KUNG PAANO MAE-EXTEND 'YUNG PANUNUNGKULAN NILA.
CHA-CHA!
NO-EL!
PARLIAM GOVERNM
HINDI PANG-HABAMBUHAY ANG PAGIGING PRESIDENTE KAYA KUNG HINDI KAYO GAGAWA NG MABUTI E MAGPATAYO NA KAYO NG SARILI N'YONG RESTHOUSE SA TANAY.

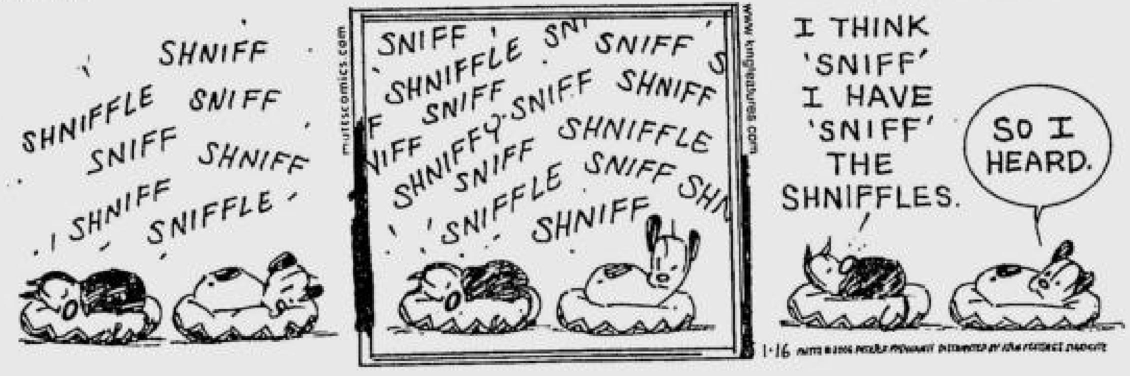
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HEY DAD, WANT TO HEAR A JOKE?
UMMM, I DON'T KNOW.
DOES IT INVOLVE BODILY FUNCTIONS, NAUGHTY WORDS, DISGUSTING IMAGES OR DISRESPECT FOR OTHERS?
IS THERE A JOKE THAT DOESN'T?
GOOD POINT. LET'S HEAR IT.
www.babyblues.com

MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


SHNIFF
SHNIFFLE SNIFF
SNIFF SHNIFF
SHNIFF SNIFFLE
SNIFF SHNIFFLE SNIFF SHNIFF SHNIFF SNIFF SHNIFFLE SNIFF SNIFFLE SNIFF SHNIFF
mutscomics.com
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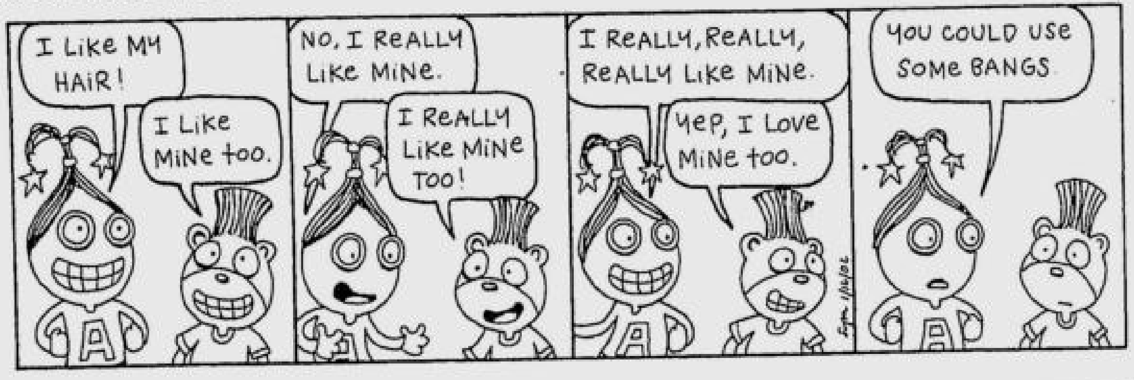
I THINK 'SNIFF' I HAVE 'SNIFF' THE SHNIFFLES.
SO I HEARD.
1-16

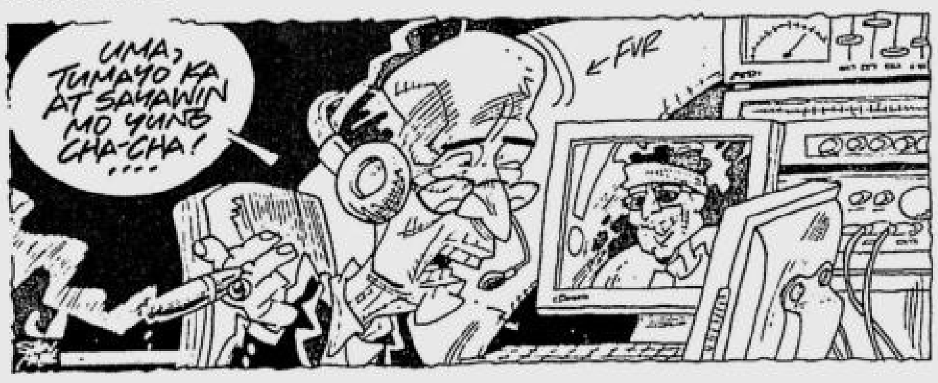
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I LIKE MY HAIR!
I LIKE MINE TOO.
NO, I REALLY LIKE MINE.
I REALLY LIKE MINE TOO!
I REALLY, REALLY, REALLY LIKE MINE.
YEP, I LOVE MINE TOO.
YOU COULD USE SOME BANGS.

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


UMA, TUMAYO KA AT SAYAWIN MO YUNG CHA-CHA!...
FVR

NGAYON ALAM NA NATIN KUNG SINO ANG PERSONALITY NA NASA LIKOD NG BOSES NI BIG BROTHER

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You work hard for what you want. You rise to a challenge; nevertheless, you're realistic. You like specific goals. You want to know what is expected of you, because you intend to deliver it. Major changes might take place this year. These changes could be as significant as those that took place in 1997.

Birthdate of: A.J. Foyt, car racer; Susan Sontag, writer/philosophy professor; Dian Fossey, animal activist.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): It's totally appropriate to ask yourself what you want to be when you grow up. Now is the time when you're thinking about your long-term future. Go back to school if necessary.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Your mission, should you choose to accept it (and do you have a choice?), is to establish a good home base for you and your family.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Be open to the strong possibility of a job change or residential move in the year ahead. Some of you might have already done this. Some might do it again!

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Your major focus in the year ahead is your job. You want to find work that is meaningful, fulfilling and that pays you as much as possible.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Don't be surprised if you pull in a little this year. You might have more solitude. This is a major turning point in your life.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You're definitely entering a time in your life where you will have to let go of things. Be prepared to give up whatever is no longer relevant in your life.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): The good news is many of you (in fact, most) will earn more money this year. Good. Money is so handy when you want to buy things, isn't it?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): At this stage in your life, you're strong. You see what is working, and you see what is not. Go after whatever you want. You will be successful!

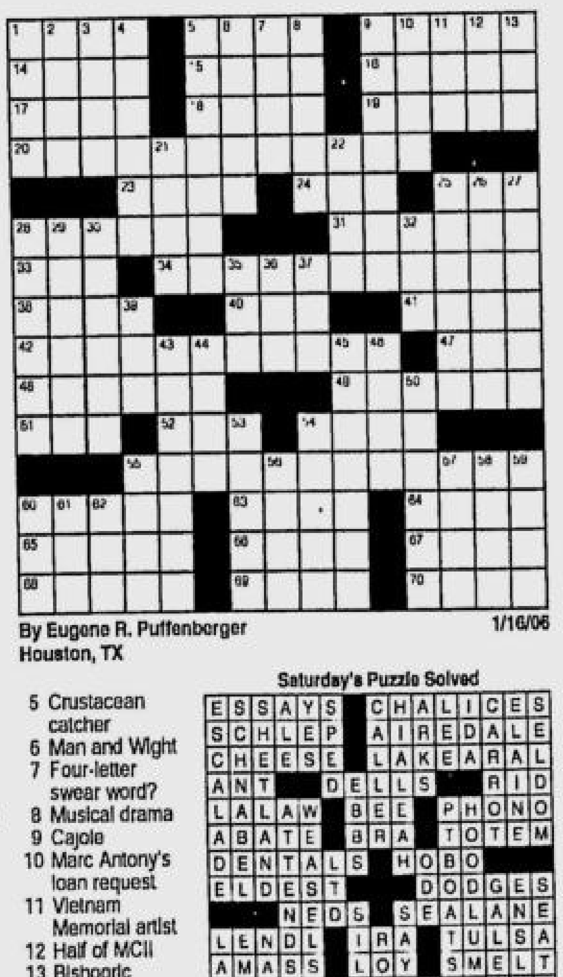
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is the time to make serious educational plans or get extra training in order to improve your career options. A few years down the road, you will be glad you did this.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is a time when you have to rely on your own resources. Partners are quitting jobs or trying something new. Don't worry; you'll only get stronger!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Partnerships continue to be challenging this year. In part, this is because you are taking your power! This is inevitable.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Continue to work hard in the year ahead. This is your mandate. If you work hard now, you will see rewards and a lovely payoff in the next two years. Guaranteed.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Eugene R. Puffenberger
Houston, TX
1/16/06

ACROSS

1 As a result
5 Bologna bye-bye
9 Joins metals with heat
14 Stood up
15 Invitation letters
16 Ethiopia's Selassie
17 Water pitcher
18 Toward shelter
19 Pyle or Ford
20 Wine-maker's fruits
23 Captures
24 Plus
25 European peak
28 Plot
31 Hubbub
33 "7 Faces of Doctor _"
34 Brooklyn Dodger hurler
38 Hautboy
40 Title role for Will Smith
41 Explorer Zebulon
42 Cookable fruits
47 Heavy weight
48 Related on mother's side
49 Arctic and Indian
51 Doris or Dennis
52 "__ Kapital"
54 Thailand, once
55 Certain church seat
60 Shoelace tip
63 Leave out
64 Demolish
65 New Zealand native
66 Run easily
67 Grind one's teeth
68 Mel of cartoon voices
69 Active person
70 Merit

DOWN

1 Birch or maple
2 Ginsberg beatnik-era poem
3 Second-hand
4 Peaceful
5 Crustacean catcher
6 Man and Wight
7 Four-letter swear word?
8 Musical drama
9 Cajole
10 Marc Antony's loan request
11 Vietnam Memorial artist
12 Half of MCII
13 Bishopric
21 Freeway approach
22 Foot part
25 Ambrosia of immortality
26 Observe
27 Spruces up
28 Reduced speed
29 Beach shelter
30 Shout of joy
32 Dada founder
35 "The Raven" monogram
36 Ginger __
37 OSS, now
39 NYC summer hrs
43 Like very clear memories
44 Final Four org.
45 Revel loudly
46 Wound cover
50 Come out of hiding
53 Chide
54 Shore bird
55 Laura or Bruce
56 "Typee" sequel
57 Zola heroine
58 Former Russian ruler
59 Chopped
60 Embassy CEO
61 Guy's honey
62 Mauna

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

E	S	S	A	Y	S	■	C	H	A	L	I	C	E	S
S	C	H	L	E	P	■	A	I	R	E	D	A	L	E
C	H	E	E	S	E	■	L	A	K	E	A	R	A	L
A	N	T	■	■	D	E	L	L	S	■	■	R	I	D
L	A	L	A	W	■	B	E	E	■	P	H	O	N	O
A	B	A	T	E	■	B	R	A	■	T	O	T	E	M
D	E	N	T	A	L	S	■	H	O	B	O	■	■	■
E	L	D	E	S	T	■	■	■	D	O	D	G	E	S
■	■	■	N	E	D	S	■	S	E	A	L	A	N	E
L	E	N	D	L	■	I	R	A	■	T	U	L	S	A
A	M	A	S	S	■	L	O	Y	■	S	M	E	L	T
P	E	P	■	■	S	E	U	S	S	■	■	N	A	B
T	R	I	L	L	I	N	G	■	A	R	H	I	V	E
O	G	E	E	A	R	C	H	■	K	E	I	T	E	L
P	E	R	I	G	E	E	S	■	E	X	P	E	R	T

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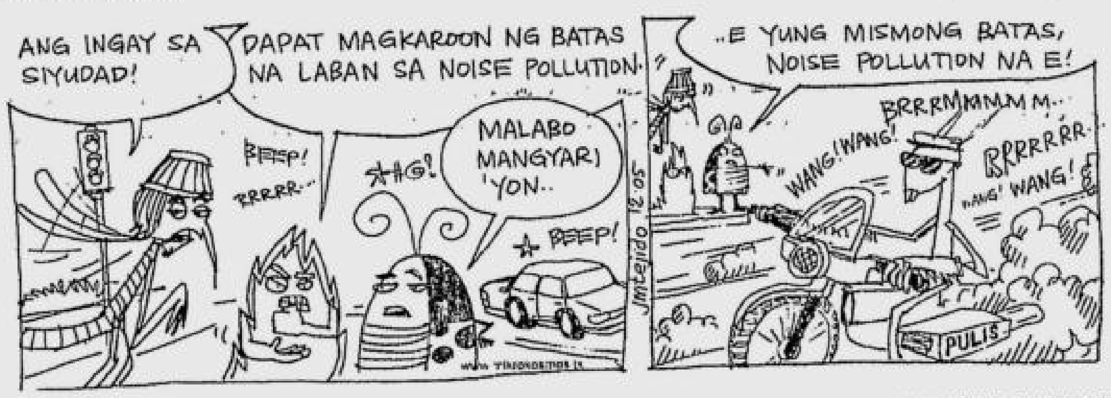
1/16/06

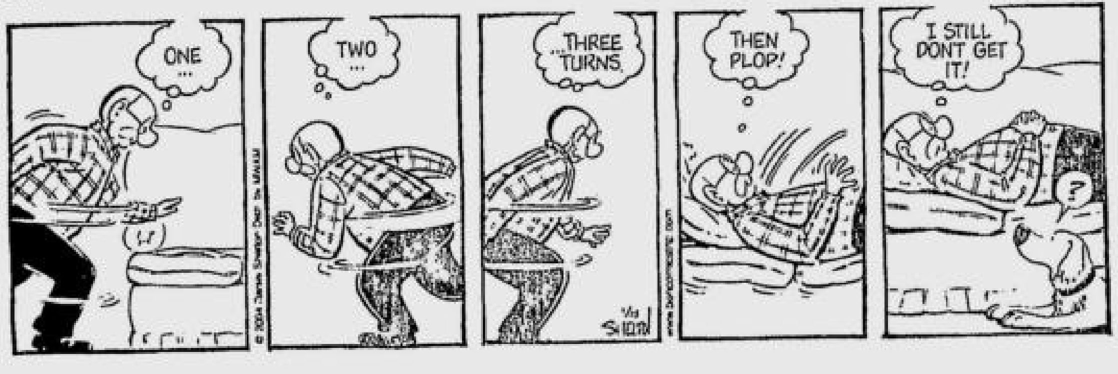
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


ANG INGAY SA SIYUDAD!
DAPAT MAGKAROON NG BATAS NA LABAN SA NOISE POLLUTION.
BEEP!
RRRRR...
*HG!
MALABO MANGYARI 'YON..
BEEP!
jmtejido 12.05
..E YUNG MISMONG BATAS, NOISE POLLUTION NA E!
BRRRMMMMM M..
WANG! WANG!
BRRRRRR
WANG! WANG!
PULIS

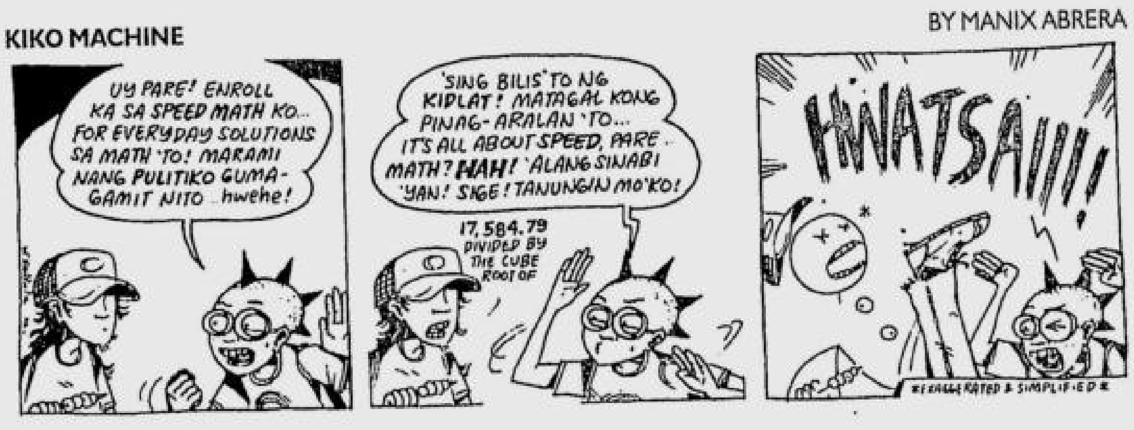
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


ONE ...
TWO ...
...THREE TURNS
THEN PLOP!
I STILL DON'T GET IT!
?
SHELTON

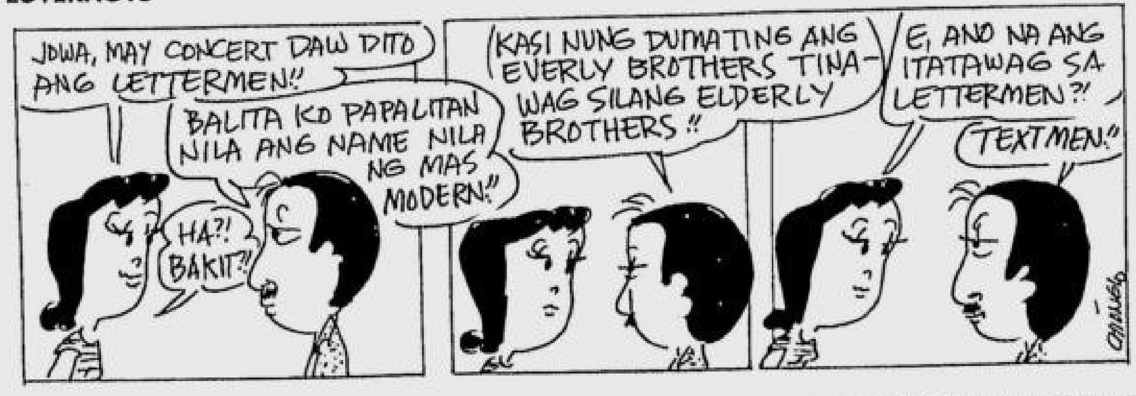
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


UY PARE! ENROLL KA SA SPEED MATH KO... FOR EVERYDAY SOLUTIONS SA MATH 'TO! MARAMI NANG PULITIKO GUMAGAMIT NITO ..hwehe!
'SING BILIS 'TO NG KIDLAT! MATAGAL KONG PINAG-ARALAN 'TO... IT'S ALL ABOUT SPEED, PARE. MATH? HAH! 'ALANG SINABI 'YAN! SIGE! TANUNGIN MO'KO!
17,584.79 DIVIDED BY THE CUBE ROOT OF
HWATSAIII!
EXAGGERATED & SIMPLIFIED

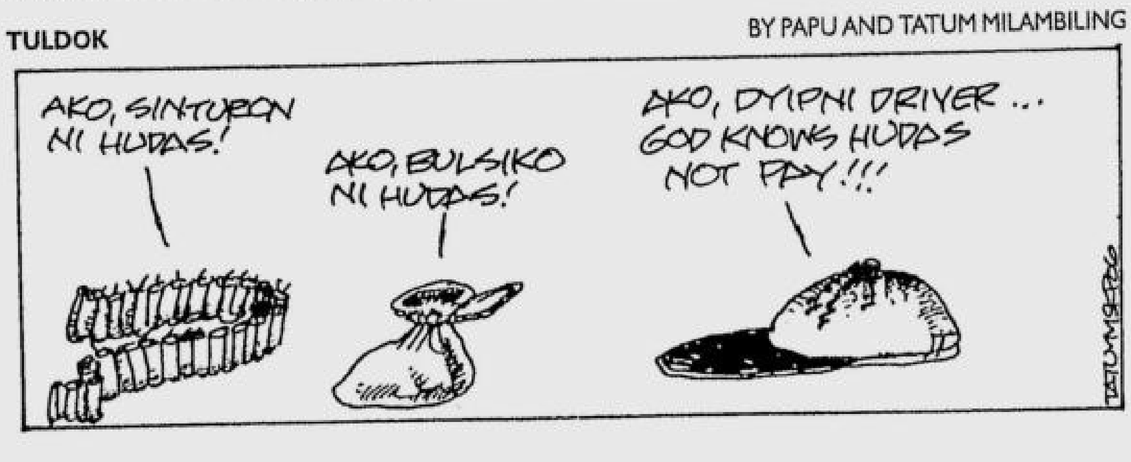
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JOWA, MAY CONCERT DAW DITO ANG LETTERMEN!!
BALITA KO PAPALITAN NILA ANG NAME NILA NG MAS MODERN!!
HA?! BAKIT?!
KASI NUNG DUMATING ANG EVERLY BROTHERS TINAWAG SILANG ELDERLY BROTHERS!!
E, ANO NA ANG ITATAWAG SA LETTERMEN?!
TEXTMEN!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


AKO, SINTURON NI HUDAS!
AKO, BULSIKO NI HUDAS!
AKO, DYIPNI DRIVER ... GOD KNOWS HUDAS NOT PAY!!!
TATUMSERG

Where have you gone, Juliet and Romeo?

From page D1

Shakespearean as against their "contemporized" equivalent. "Oh me, oh my" sounds dangerously like Celia Rodriguez cooing in a Joey Gosiengfiao movie.

The friar's furious words upon learning that his letter to Romeo never reached the young man—"Unhappy fortune! By my brotherhood/The letter was not nice but full of charge/Of dear import"—has been rephrased thus: "This letter is full of news of great importance!" (Or at least that's how it sounded from the slurry delivery of Ron Capinding, an otherwise agreeable Friar Laurence.)

Modern? Sure, but in the context of a play that boldly bills itself as "by William Shakespeare," the line is also clunky and perfunctory. Come to think of it, words you could also say of this "Romeo and Juliet." (To be fair, we caught the press gala. Maybe things have improved since then.)

Promising

It is true that a number of key verses still grace the show, most of them uttered by Juliet (a comely Ina Feleo in a very promising performance). But the extent of the changes—and consequently having to sit through three hours of frankly disposable Shakespeare—left us mortified.

Luhrmann's gaudy, flamboyant way with material like this has clearly had a major influence on Abad and his creative team. Salvador Bernal's set design of whitewashed steel ramps and neon lights bring to mind a retro-futuristic universe. As in a videogame, when the rival gangs score in basketball, the backboard lights up in blue and an electronic thump is heard.

The costumes are a pastiche of Renaissance cuts and Japanese silhouettes, while the swordfights have devolved into arnis. The resulting indeterminate stew is an elaborate sight.

Where it had worked with "Midsummer's" menagerie of woodland creatures, however, here it is merely loud and showy, underscored in many respects by the cast's frenzied antics onstage.

If anything, that inability to find stillness even in the quietest scenes gives this "Romeo and Juliet" a crippling whiff of anxiety.

The young lovers' coupling, for instance, which features simulated nudity, is at once terribly floodlighted (Donato Karingal did the lighting design) and indicative of the "more is more" mindset of the show.

This most intimate of scenes overflows with other writhing bodies—pairs of lovers who enact various Indian-inspired lovemaking postures while Romeo and Juliet do their thing in bed. Yet because hardly a shadow curtains these pairings, their bald exertions seem more comical than erotic. (The musical "Rama at Sita" did it better years ago with dim lighting and fewer bodies.)

More hilarious is the sight of Friar Laurence and his band of Franciscan brothers breaking into a combination jig-breakdance-ballet set to techno music. Writer Dennis Ladaw, normally a very placid creature, offered the best assessment: "It reminded me of the Ewoks."

Musical

The busy dances (choreographed by Dexter Santos) point to a more rewarding course Abad and his team might want to take. If this "Romeo and Juliet" were a musical (hello, "West Side Story,") all this tinkering would make better sense. Indeed, Abad's mise-en-scene seems, in many ways, musically inspired.

The arresting double-funeral tableaux that bookends the play cries out for recurring theme music. Juliet and Romeo's respective moments with Nanny and Friar Laurence after Romeo's official banishment, now collapsed into a single counterpoint scene, would make for an interesting quartet. And the pair's dream sequence near the end (the only embellishment that works, and a moving one) could be an excuse for a great 11 o'clock love duet.

The "Twilight Zone" music, though, has to go. And that angel.

"Romeo and Juliet's" high romantic points are graced by a hunk dressed in a silvery and quite skimpy Grecian dress—yes, an angel. First he descends on a harness during the pair's exchange of vows, then he visits them on their deathbed.

At curtain time, the apparition takes his bow by once again dangling from a harness. So while the rest of the ensemble claim their places upfront, he's stuck up there, forlorn and helpless.

Alas, so is this "Romeo and Juliet."

"Romeo and Juliet" runs until Feb. 4 at the AFP Theater. Call 0928-4001219 or 8919999.

E-mail the author at gcadiz@inquirer.com.ph

BALLET MANILA GETS SUPPORT FROM MALACAÑANG

President Macapagal-Arroyo's President Social Fund provided the travel grant for Ballet Manila to perform in seven Russian cities to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of Philippine-Russian Friendship and Diplomatic Ties. Photo shows Philippine Ambassador Ernesto and Ms Macaria V. Llamas with the Ballet Manila dancers in Moscow upon arrival. The Ballet Manila tour group included Osias Barroso, Sandra Lynn Huang, Marian Faustino, Mylene Aggabao, Sofia Sangco, Zaira Cosico, Gabriella Galvez, Anne Kateri Gelvoria, Yanti Marduli, Jennifer Rose Olayvar, Alexa Marie Sayson, Ea Marie Torrado, Kristen Voss, Jerome Espejo, Roduardo Ma, Francis Cascaño, Ricardo Mallari, Alvin Santos, Jonathan Janolo, Lemuel Capa, Rudy De Dios, Gerardo Francisco, Raymart Ramos, Romeo Peralta, Niño Guevarra and Jaime Villanueva.

Chamber music concert to benefit music scholars

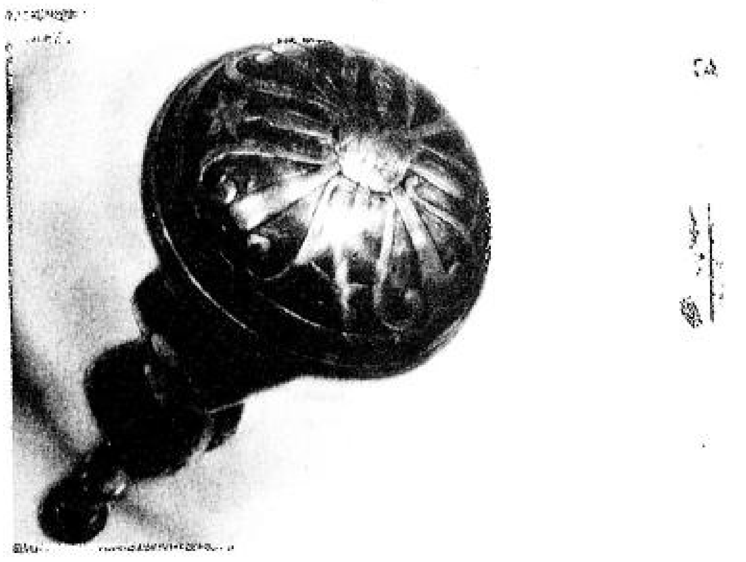
DR. DANILO SORIANO, A NEUROSURGEON and violinist based in Las Vegas, will hold a benefit concert on Jan. 18, 7:30 p.m., at the Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino (Cultural Center of the Philippines Little Theater). Soriano will perform with the UP College of Music faculty: Ena Maria Aldecoa andMauricia Borromeo (piano), Edna Marcil Martinez (viola), Isidora Miranda (violin) and Ed Pasamba (cello).

The concert will raise funds for the Likha't Diwa Foundation, which supports the performing and the fine arts. Call 0917-8122012 or 9260024.

DR. DANILO Soriano

EXHIBIT ON UST RECTORS

The University of Santo Tomas Museum of Arts and Sciences will open today at 4 p.m. the exhibit, "UST Rectors Through the Years: Continuing the Legacy of Leaders." The exhibit charts through text and memorabilia the men who have occupied the post of Rector Magnifus of the Pontifical University since its foundation in 1611. The exhibit is part of the celebration of the 395th anniversary of UST, Asia's oldest university. In photo is the Rector's ceremonial maze (circa 17th century, silver), symbol of authority of the UST Rector, which is still used during academic ceremonies.



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Rep bares 2006 season

ANA BITONG as Harriet

A COMEDY, A ROMANTIC MUSICAL, A restaging of one of Repertory Philippines' most successful plays—this time in a Filipino setting—and one of those rollicking sitcoms that Rep does so well, are scheduled for the first half of Rep's 2006 theatrical year.

Miguel Faustmann, Ana Bitong, Charlie Barredo and Bonggoy Manahan are featured in "Nobody's Perfect" by Simon Williams, which opens on Jan. 20 with performances on Jan. 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, Feb. 3-5.

"I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change," with book and lyrics by Joe de Pietro and music by Jimmy Roberts, is now the longest-running off-Broadway musical and is Rep's February offering. It has been called a "Seinfeld" set to music. Performances are on weekends Feb. 17-March 12.

Rep will stage again "Mornings at Seven" by Paul Osborn in March—this time set not in the backyards of two houses in a small American town but in a Philippine provincial town in the 1930s.

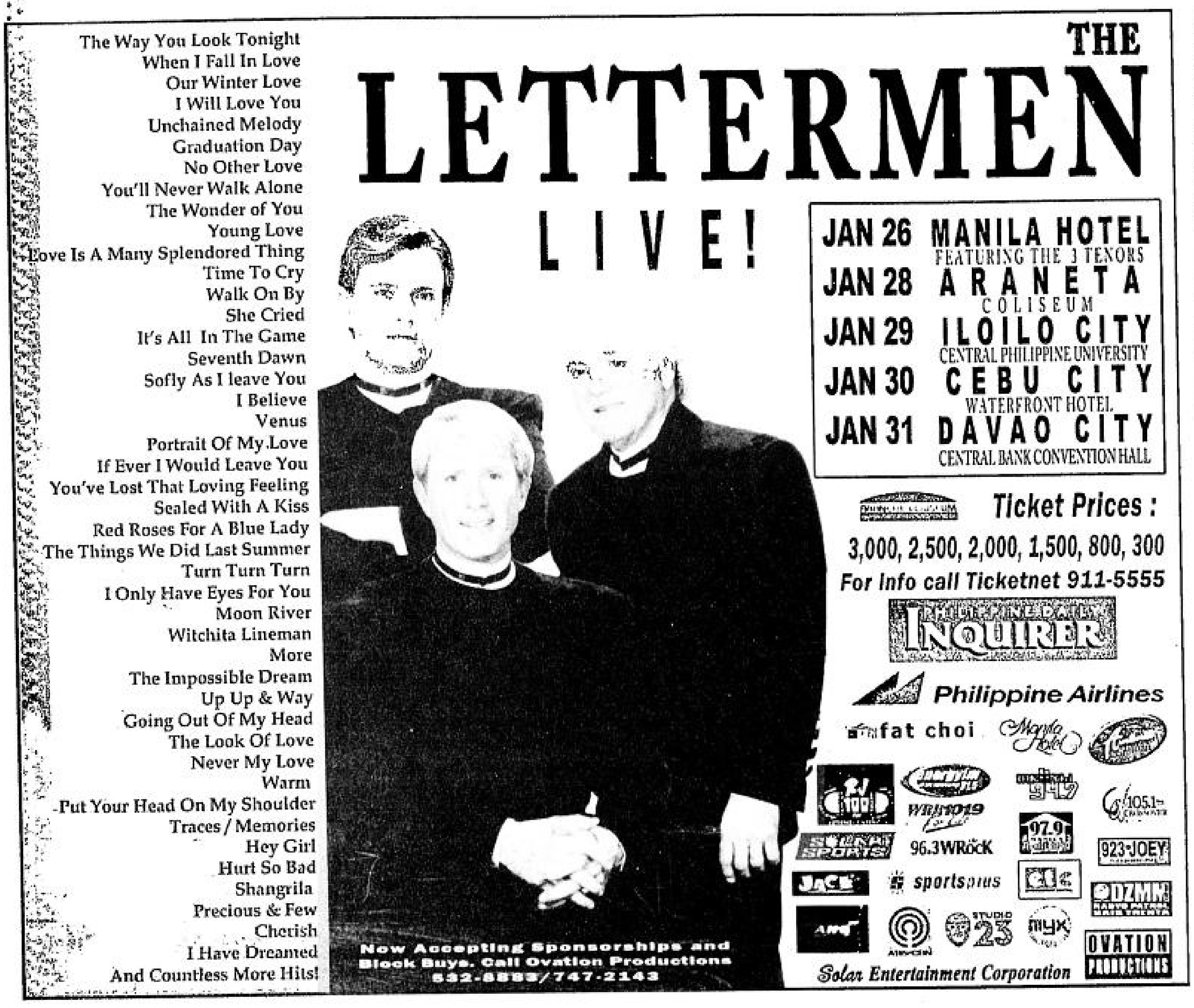
"7 Nang Umaga" is a sweet, gentle comedy about four elderly sisters who, in a dispute about a house, uncover hidden feelings about each other, their husbands and their children. The play runs on weekends March 24-April 9.

Season passes are now available. These passes give discounts over tickets bought singly and allow the holder to watch shows on any of the dates listed on the pass. Discounts are available for purchases of four, five, six or seven plays.

For prices and other information, call the Rep office at 8870710 or Greenbelt 1 Ticketron at 7504180, or visit the Rep office at C2-A Building C, Karrivin Plaza, 2316 Pasong Tamo Extension, Makati City.

All Rep performances are at Rep's Globe Theater at Onstage in Greenbelt 1. Weekend performances (except for the Children's theater) are Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday at 3:30 p.m.

MIGUEL Faustmann as Aunt Myrtle



The Way You Look Tonight
When I Fall In Love
Our Winter Love
I Will Love You
Unchained Melody
Graduation Day
No Other Love
You'll Never Walk Alone
The Wonder of You
Young Love
Love Is A Many Splendored Thing
Time To Cry
Walk On By
She Cried
It's All In The Game
Seventh Dawn
Sofly As I leave You
I Believe
Venus
Portrait Of My Love
If Ever I Would Leave You
You've Lost That Loving Feeling
Sealed With A Kiss
Red Roses For A Blue Lady
The Things We Did Last Summer
Turn Turn Turn
I Only Have Eyes For You
Moon River
Witchita Lineman
More
The Impossible Dream
Up Up & Way
Going Out Of My Head
The Look Of Love
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MICHAEL de Mesa, Raki Vega, Gian Magdangal and Bituin Escalante

'Once on This Island' back onstage Jan. 20

ACTOR'S ACTORS INC.'S (AAI) much-acclaimed production of the Broadway musical "Once on This Island" returns to the RCBC Theater starting Jan. 20, with the original cast led by Bituin Escalante, Menchu Lauchengco-Yulo, Michael Williams, Jett Pangan, May Bayot and Bodjie Pascua, under Bart Guingona's direction.

The peasant heroine Ti Moune is played by singing sensation Raki Vega, with Gian Magdangal, fresh from his portrayal of Willard Hewitt in Stages' production of "Footloose The Musical," stepping into the role of Daniel.

Choreography is by Denisa Reyes, set design by Gino Gonzales and lighting design by John Batalla.

"Once on This Island" will have performances on Jan. 20-21, Feb. 3-5 at 8 p.m., and on Jan. 22 and Feb. 5 at 3 p.m., at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, RCBC Plaza, Ayala cor. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City.

Tickets and booking information available at TicketWorld (8919999) and Silang Communications (8190458, 0917-5289746).

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■ WORLD / A9

Socialist elected Chile's first woman president

■ SPORTS / A17

Manny Pacquiao, 10-8 underdog, smells victory

■ NEWS / A7

Mike Defensor named presidential chief of staff

■ METRO / A15

Russian diplomat found dead in Makati condo

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Tuesday, January 17, 2006 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 40 / 218 website: www.inq7.net

Top Republican says Bush may face impeachment

WASHINGTON—A TOP US REPUBLICAN SENATOR on Sunday for the first time mentioned impeachment in connection with President George W. Bush's authorization of electronic surveillance inside the United States without a court warrant.

Arlen Specter, chair of the Senate judiciary committee, cautioned it was too early to draw any conclusions as his committee gears up for public

TOP REPUBLICAN/ A14

Lozano files impeach rap ahead of opposition again

By Michael Lim Ubac

HE'S AT IT AGAIN.

Beating the opposition once again, Oliver Lozano yesterday refiled the amended impeachment complaint against Presi-

LOZANO/ A14

STOPOVER AT SWAMPLAND
Thousands of migratory birds of different species, including at least three rare ones, flock once more to the Candaba Swamp in Pampanga, one of the favorite sites of bird watching clubs in the country. JOAN BONDOC

Cory shuns Palace meet

Warns of prolonged political turmoil if GMA does not resign

By Cynthia D. Balana and Michael Lim Ubac

IN A PUBLIC SLAP AT PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO, FORmer President Corazon Aquino yesterday announced she was boycotting next week's Council of State meeting, warning of prolonged "political turmoil" in the country if Ms Arroyo continued to cling to power.

In a simultaneous move, House Minority Leader Rep. Francis Escudero said he was staying away from the scheduled Jan. 24 meeting at Malacañang called to discuss, among other things, the proposed shift to a parliamentary form of government.

Aquino said the political crisis gripping the country could best be resolved if Ms Arroyo voluntarily resigned from the presidency.

"The very legitimacy of the President's mandate remains under a cloud of doubt," Aquino said in a statement. "Rather than resolve the issue in a transparent and forthright manner, the President has opted to muddle it further by insisting that any allusion to the legitimacy issue is part of a grand conspiracy to unseat her."

Malacañang was diplomatic in its reaction.

"Former President Cory Aquino's participation will be missed," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said, noting that it was during Aquino's term that the council was formed.

"But it is certainly her prerogative not to attend," Bunye added.

Aquino's and Escudero's decision to shun the Palace meeting followed an earlier declaration by Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. that he was not coming.

Palace officials had earlier said Ms Arroyo was convening the meeting of the country's top political and economic leaders to discuss proposed amendments to the Constitution, electoral reforms and economic programs.

"To this day, I maintain that the least painful path for the nation is for the President

CORY/ A6

PRESIDENT Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro comfort a baby, who was among members of 2,903 households relocated from the site of the Northrail-Southrail linkage project along the South Superhighway in Makati City to the NHA Southville housing project in Cabuyao, Laguna. EDWIN BACASMAS

Miriam to solons: Get real

By Philip C. Tubeza and TJ Burgonio

"WHAT PLANET DID THEY COME from?"

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago asked the question yesterday after House leaders insisted that they did not need the Senate to push ahead with plans to amend the Constitution and adopt the parliamentary form of government.

"Under the rule of necessary implication, since Congress is bicameral, voting should necessarily be bicameral, that is, each chamber should vote separately," Santiago said.

"If even ordinary laws require separate voting, with even more reason a Constitution requires a separate voting," she added.

The administration senator said the "dream of a Cha-cha (Charter change) juggernaut"

GET REAL/ A6

Cha-cha supporters resorting to people's initiative

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

AWARE THAT IT WILL NOT GET the Senate on board, President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration is relying on a people's initiative to put the parliamentary system in place in six months, sources close to the Palace said yesterday.

The initiative, which needs the signature of 5 million voters, will touch on only one subject—the shift from the presidential to a parliamentary form of government, said two sources who spoke on condition of anonymity because of their roles in the effort.

Ms Arroyo's plan to effect Charter change by June was announced at Saturday's Lakas-CMD national directorate meeting.

The people's initiative was discussed during a closed-door meeting of a political party belonging to the Lakas-led rainbow coalition in the House of Representatives, said one of the sources who attended the event. The other source is one of Ms Arroyo's trusted Cabinet officials.

By limiting the proposed constitutional reform to a single amendment, Charter change advocates are optimistic they can gather the required 5 million signatures—12 percent of all the registered voters and at least 3 percent of the voters in each district.

This means eschewing the thorny and divisive issues of scrapping the 2007 elections and economic changes in the effort to transform Congress into an interim parliament through a plebiscite by June, the sources said.

Keeping the people's initiative strictly to one item would also bolster the legality of the effort as

CHA-CHA/ A6

RP future bleak, says bank analyst

By Daxim L. Lucas
Business

THE PHILIPPINES FACES A "bleak" future despite recent gains in various financial markets because the government continues to shy away from meaningful structural reforms, according to an analyst from US investment bank Bear, Stearns & Co.

Speaking before members of the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (Focap), John Stuermer—whose analysis of the country's politico-economic situation dates back to 1986—said many foreign investors remained wary of the country's prospects.

"The long-term future, in terms of raising employment and investments is very, very bleak,"

RP FUTURE/ A14

Bamboo band music lives on, even in PNP

By Luige A. del Puerto

FOR FOUR GENERATIONS, HIS family has breathed music into one of the world's most pliable plants—the bamboo.

Now, Supt. Gilbert Ramos has decided to teach his craft to policemen who form the Philippine National Police Band.

Last September, for the first time in history, the PNP Band played instruments crafted out of bamboo and created music that is distinctively Filipino.

There they were, clutching in their hands, not guns that snuff out lives, but trombones and flutes that soothe lives.

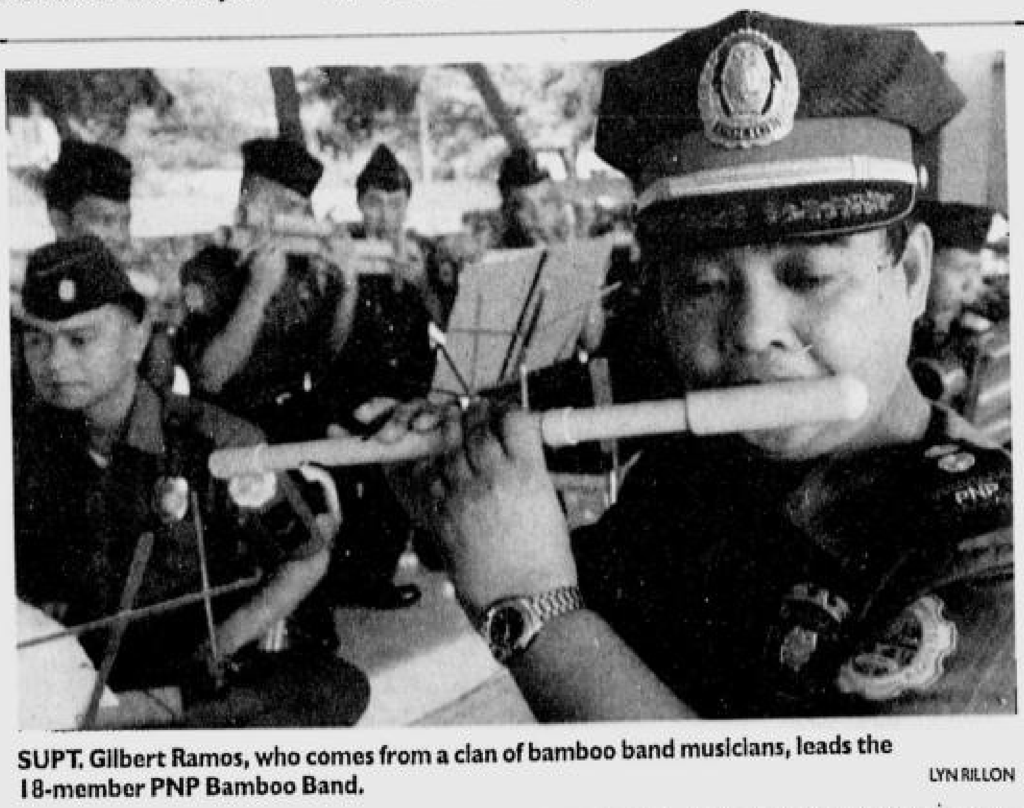
Ramos, a graduate of the University of Sto. Tomas' Conservatory of Music and conductor of the PNP Band, describes the music a bamboo band makes as gentle to the ears.

"Stand near a brass band and the blast is strong. But a bamboo band, no matter how close you are, will not hurt your ears," he says.

On his desk at his office at Camp Crame are stacks of musical scores. On the walls are photos, some in sepia, of a past rich in music.

"Another difference," he says, "is that majority of the bamboo instruments can play only a limited number

BAMBOO/ A14



SUPT. Gilbert Ramos, who comes from a clan of bamboo band musicians, leads the 18-member PNP Bamboo Band. LYN RILLON

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Bicol, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. There will be frequent rains over Eastern and Central Visayas and Northern Mindanao. The rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies.

COMPILED BY: CYRIL L. BONABENTE, PDI RESEARCH/01/17/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
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RSM seen as biggest security threat

SE Asian terrorists 'regrouping, recruiting'

JAKARTA, INDONESIA — SOUTHeast Asian terrorists are "regrouping, adapting and recruiting," and more regional cooperation is required to defeat them, Indonesia's president said Monday.

In a speech to lawmakers from the Asia-Pacific region, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono warned that the campaign against militants would be a long one, and said it would need to be fought on "political, economical, legal, social and spiritual" fronts.

"We know that the terrorists are regrouping, adapting and recruiting," he said. "We all need to intensify our cooperation to fight terrorism."

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, is a key front in the war against terrorism in Southeast Asia.

Militants from the al-Qaida linked Jemaah Islamiyah network have launched a series of bloody strikes against Western and Christian targets in the country since 2000, including two attacks on Bali island that killed more than 220 people, mostly foreign tourists.

Jemaah Islamiyah is also blamed for attacks in the Philippines and failed plots elsewhere in the region. *AP*

A MUSLIM MILITANT GROUP COMPRISED OF CONVERTS which has links to Jemaah Islamiyah poses the biggest security threat to the Philippines, a regional security analyst said yesterday.

The Rajah Solaiman Movement is composed of Filipinos who worked in the Middle East and later converted to Islam and should be considered a "terrorist Islamist" group, said Scott Harrison, former CIA station chief in Manila and currently managing director of the Pacific Strategies and Assessments Inc.

Filipino intelligence agents arrested the founder of the movement in October along with eight supporters.

They were charged with plotting to bomb high-profile targets, including the US Embassy, and of assisting the Abu Sayyaf and the Jemaah Islamiyah groups.

The Abu Sayyaf and the JI are linked to al-Qaida and are on the US government's list of foreign terrorist organizations.

The JI has been blamed for the 2002 and 2005 bombings in Bali, Indonesia, which left over 200 people dead while the Abu Sayyaf is behind the Philippines' worst terrorist attacks in recent years.

While the arrests have partially broken up the RSM, the group remains "the most potentially dangerous element of terrorism in the Philippines because of their Christian background," Harrison told foreign correspondents.

The group can also easily blend with the rest of the populace, allowing them to operate primarily in Metro Manila, he said.

Last month, the International Crisis Group said in a report that both the JI and the Abu Sayyaf were trying to boost their ties with the Raja Solaiman Movement.

This came about after the main Muslim separatist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), moved to end ties with foreign militants and began peace talks with Manila.

"Several counter-terrorism 'successes have inadvertently deepened the nexus between foreign jihadis, Abu Sayyaf, the RSM and the more militant MILF members," the ICG said.

Harrison said lack of equipment, training, funds and inherent corruption within the military were hampering the Philippines' fight against militant groups.

The country's expansive and porous southern borders also make it easy for terrorist cells to enter from neighboring countries.

"Overall, I believe there has been only limited counter-terrorism success in the Philippines in recent years," Harrison said. *AFP*

MILF rebels see peace talks as done deal

COTABATO CITY – PEACE TALKS WITH THE Philippine government are largely a done deal, the chief negotiator of the largest Muslim rebel group said on Monday, even if only about half of the contentious issues had been settled.

Mohaqher Iqbal, a member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) central committee, said his group was confident that an agreement on an ancestral homeland for four million Muslims in the south may be signed within the first six months of this year.

But the final peace accord would have to wait until the two sides have agreed on what form of government would be set up in a specific Muslim territory.

"We're 85 percent finished, that's quantitatively speaking," Iqbal told Reuters at a riverside hideout outside Cotabato City, the financial hub of poor Muslim communities on the southern island of Mindanao.

"In terms of quality, we're still very far because the last phase of the talks is the most difficult agenda and we've done only about 50 percent. But we're inching forward." Government and MILF peace negotiators are due to resume informal talks this month in Malaysia, hoping to overcome "minor obstacles" on the path towards a Muslim ancestral homeland.

"There's no question that large parts of Mindanao, Sulu, Tawi-tawi and Palawan island are part of a Muslim ancestral land," Iqbal said over sweet tea and banana fritters.

"The MILF is very practical. We would not try to reclaim areas no longer in the hands of Muslims. But, like the American native Indians that owned Manhattan in New York, we would like to discuss compensation for the territories lost." Finer details on the issues of territory and governance, including possible disarmament, would be taken up after the two sides come to an agreement on ancestral domain, the third and final major point. The nearly 40-year separatist insurgency by the 12,000-member MILF, the largest of four Muslim rebel forces in the mainly Roman Catholic country, has killed more than 120,000 people and stunted rural development in the impoverished south.

A truce has held since July 2003 and further cooperation with the MILF under a peace agreement would further isolate homegrown groups such as Abu Sayyaf that have been linked to al Qaida and its allied Southeast Asian network, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

The United States, Manila's closest security partner in the region and a major source of military assistance, has criticised the Philippines for not pushing the MILF hard enough to crack down on foreign militants hiding on Mindanao.

Washington has said Indonesian militants Umar Patek and Dulmatin – two key suspects in the October 2002 Bali bombings that killed about 200 people – are believed to be in Mindanao. *Reuters*

AN URGENT APPEAL TO OUR LEADERS AS CONGRESS SESSIONS RESUME

As Congress resumes its sessions, Consumer & Oil Price Watch appeals to our political leaders in both the Senate and the House of Representatives to practice the highest degree of statesmanship and temporarily set aside political issues in favor of more pressing ones such as:

ECONOMIC REFORMS MUST BE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY

The peso has significantly strengthened over the holiday season due to the influx of OFW remittances and the implementation of the EVAT. This momentum must NOT be lost.

We urge our leaders to *prioritize pending economic and financial reforms* that will encourage more local and foreign investments. This will result in the creation of much needed jobs for our people and will help uplift the quality of life, especially of the poor.

THE WELFARE OF OUR COUNTRYMEN SHOULD BE PUT OVER ANY AND ALL POLITICAL INTERESTS.

DEBATES ON CON-COM MUST BE TEMPORARILY SET ASIDE

Debates on the controversial transitory provisions of the Con-Com proposal are confusing and divisive as most of the proposed amendments are too complex - most especially the transition to a parliamentary system of government.

We urge our leaders to hold proper PUBLIC consultations and deliberations to better explain to our countrymen the merits of a shift from presidential to parliamentary forms of government.

While a change in the form of government may be on the horizon, COPW again reiterates that true and lasting change can only come about through a change in values of our political leaders.

2007 ELECTIONS MUST PUSH THROUGH

As we have stated in our print ads last week, COPW maintains the position that the National Elections in May 2007 MUST push through as provided by the Constitution.

Whether it's a unicameral parliamentary or the current bicameral (which our people will decide in a plebiscite), elections must be held for the 12 Senators, 238 Representatives, and around 17,000 local posts in cities, municipalities, and provinces whose term of office will expire in 2007.

Elections will unite, rather than divide the nation.
It will clarify the issues, rather than confuse our people.

THE CLEANUP OF ELECTORAL PROCEDURES MUST PROCEED IMMEDIATELY

The cleanup of electoral procedures must NOT be postponed; in fact, the modernization program should start IMMEDIATELY. This will include computerized registration, automated counting machines, and electronic transmission of votes.

Computerization of our electoral system will ensure transparency and eliminate any possible human intervention or tampering of results.

Furthermore, COMELEC should be cleansed and be made free from political pressure in order to restore its credibility.

Our countrymen are FED UP with elections that they perceive as open to anomalies and manipulation.
Only when they are convinced that the elections they have participated in are clean, honest, and free from anomaly will they respect any results.

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Nur wants to go abroad to regain 'vigor of youth'

By Armand N. Nocum

FORMER ARMM GOV. NUR MISuari, who has had four wives, wants to be allowed to seek medical treatment abroad for "loss of vigor of youth" and other ailments, but government prosecutors say it's a "flimsy sickness" and are blocking the move.

In a four-page "Supplemental Opposition" to the "Motion for Medical Treatment" filed by Misuari, who is in jail pending trial on rebellion charges, Department of Justice prosecutors recommended that Misuari's bid to have medical treatment abroad be "denied for lack of merit."

"If indeed he is sick as he claims to be, treatment cannot simply be had in a hospital of his choice. Neither can (Misuari), by advancing all sorts of flimsy sickness, like loss of vigor of youth, feeling of isolation, emotional trauma, mental suffering, emotional anxiety and mental stress, demand and expect hospitalization, worst, even abroad," the Jan. 16 prosecution motion said.

Misuari, who is detained in a special facility in Fort Sto. Domingo in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, filed his motion with the Makati Regional Trial Court last Nov. 3, saying that apart from medical treatment, his temporary freedom would also afford him the chance to "contribute to the elusive search for lasting peace in Mindanao."

Misuari, chair and founder of the Moro National Liberation Front, led a short-lived rebellion in Sulu in November 2001 after authorities went after him for alleged multibillion graft at the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, or ARMM.

In his motion opposing Misuari's request, State Prosecutor Peter Ong argued that the local Muslim leader's attendance of an Islamic gathering and his holding of a press conference during a brief furlough from jail on Jan. 10 belied his claim of sickness.

Ong stressed that Misuari was charged with rebellion, a "heinous crime and a non-bailable offense."

During his press briefing last week, Misuari said he expected the government would speed up the resolution of his case and that he would soon be free.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez admitted last week that the government was softening up on Misuari, given the role he could play in bringing peace to Mindanao.

IT COULD TAKE 10 DAYS

DFA on bid to arrest GIs: Be patient

By Volt Contreras

THE ARREST WARRANT FOR THE four American Marines charged with raping a Filipino woman could take 10 days to be served under the rules of court, an official of the Department of Foreign Affairs explained yesterday.

DFA spokesperson Gilberto Asuque has asked the public to "be patient" concerning the Philippine bid to gain custody of the accused, the subject of ongoing negotiations between the department and the soldiers' custodian, the US Embassy in Manila.

"They are now meeting as we speak," Asuque said in a 3 p.m. briefing, referring to the DFA and US Embassy negotiators.

"One of the virtues of diplomacy is patience, and we will exercise a lot of patience coupled with perseverance," he said. "We continue to exhaust all diplomatic means."

The spokesperson said that under court procedures, the officer designated by the court to serve the warrant has up to 10 calendar days—weekends included—to carry out the task. If the officer fails to do so, he is required to state the reason in a report to the court.

Thus, the warrants for the American rape suspects which were issued last Friday by Olongapo City Judge Renato Dilag have until Monday next week, Jan. 23, to be served, he added.

As of yesterday, the warrants remained with the Department of Justice from which, Asuque said, the DFA awaits "guidance" on the matter.

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Dagupan bishop warns of uprising

A SENIOR BISHOP YESTERDAY warned of looming social unrest amid political uncertainty surrounding the government of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Archbishop Oscar Cruz, a member of the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, said a widespread feeling of despair and distrust of the government could lead to the "fast formation and ultimate explosion of a social volcano." "There is much resentment and restlessness in the land. People feel not only depressed but also repressed," Cruz said in a statement.

"The country is in big trouble. The people are suffering much. The present is very difficult, the future is far from promising." He said that despite Arroyo's promises to create more jobs, in reality there was less work available for Filipinos even as higher taxes are imposed.

Arroyo's popularity has fallen drastically over allegations she rigged the May 2004 vote, leading to an impeachment attempt in Congress that she overcame last year.

She had admitted calling an election official during the vote-counting but denied any wrongdoing.

However, several of her economic managers abandoned her as well as political allies such as former President Corazon Aquino.

The bishop's conference last year censured Arroyo for admitting she called the election official but stopped short of calling for her ouster.

The church remains an influential political force in this mainly Roman Catholic country. *AFP*

New group calls for GMA ouster, special polls

By DJ Yap

THE NEWLY ORGANIZED SOcio-political and spiritual group Pagasa is calling for the "non-violent ouster" of President Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice President Noli de Castro to pave the way for special elections as a major first step in bringing about sweeping political reforms across the country.

Pagasa, short for People's Assembly for Genuine Alternatives to Social Apathy, said the removal of the Arroyo administration and the holding of special elections were crucial to resolving the festering political crisis which it said was pushing the country to the brink of civil war.

Since Ms Arroyo and De Castro have said they will not resign and the likelihood of their removal by impeachment was slim, Pagasa said it was backing their ouster through extra-constitutional means, such as a peaceful uprising by the military and the civilian populace similar to the previous two Edsa revolts.

Pagasa is a citizen's movement calling for an end to "manipulative elite rule" and the establishment of true democracy through systemic reforms backed by inner change. It is composed of representatives of the poor and marginalized sectors of society and members of the academe, religious, artist, professionals, non-government organizations and foundations. It was formed at the height of the oust Gloria movement.

In launching the new movement on Sunday, Pagasa spokesperson Nicanor Perlas said the special elections were a better alternative to a military junta that might arise should a military coup d'etat succeed.

A military takeover without citizen support "will result in a bloody mini-civil war among different factions of the military," the Pagasa fact sheet said, adding that a junta "will have a difficult time retaining domestic and global legitimacy, if at all."

In contrast, a special election can provide Filipinos with a "promising and realistic" direction amidst the political crisis, Pagasa said.

"We are suffering from the results of a stolen election and the installation of a de facto military junta," said Fr. Raul "Puti" Enriquez, another Pagasa spokesperson.

"The special election being proposed by Pagasa requires the overhauling of the electoral personnel, structures, and processes, including the removal of all corrupt Commission on Elections officials and personnel, as well as changes in the rules and procedures of the electoral process to guarantee clean and honest elections," according to Pagasa document.

According to Perlas, previous oust-Arroyo movements failed because the people could not see clear alternatives to the current administration.

"Filipinos are so fed up with trapos," Perlas said. "They saw the previous anti-GMA moves as a fight between evil and another evil."

If a mass uprising succeeds in toppling the Arroyo administration, a "Body of Stewards," composed of multi-sectoral, gender-balanced and geographically diverse leaders, will step in to temporarily take over the government. Once special elections are called, and new leaders are sworn in, the body will step down, he said.

Perlas stressed that Pagasa is not to be identified with the political opposition, though many of them have approached the group to express support for the movement.

Pagasa has begun a 1 million signature campaign for the holding of the special elections, Perlas said. If they succeed, Ms Arroyo should be removed by May 2006, upon which the Body of Stewards shall take over.

The special election itself can coincide with and use the budget for the scheduled May 2007 polls, he said.

Fugitive captain pops up at Crame

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Luige A. del Puerto

FUGITIVE MARINE CAPT. Nicanor Faeldon is getting bolder in taunting authorities who are supposed to be hunting him down.

Faeldon, one of the supposed core leaders of the 2003 Oakwood mutiny, casually strolled in front of the Philippine National Police National Headquarters (PNP-NHQ) in Camp Crame and even asked a police officer for directions—without getting caught.

He posted the video clip and still pictures of his latest foray into the "enemy camp" on his web site at www.pilipino.org.ph.

He did not give a date for his Camp Crame visit, but it seemed recent since the footage showed Christmas decorations on the lamp posts.

Last Jan. 5, Faeldon released pictures of himself at the Armed Forces of the Philippines Western Command (Wescom) headquarters in Puerto Princesa City taken on Dec. 21, 2005.

Shortly after, he released pictures of himself at the Southern Command (Southcom) headquarters in Zamboanga City.

"No one can stop me from entering these camps unless the corrupt generals themselves man the entrances. The soldiers and officers of the military who remain loyal to the people will not turn me in," boasted Faeldon on his web site.

Faeldon escaped from military custody last Dec. 14 after attending a coup d'etat trial hearing at the Makati Regional Trial Court.

The latest video, taken from a vehicle parked across the PNP-NHQ building, showed Faeldon in a red T-shirt and jeans strolling in front of the building along with other pedestrians.

Faeldon stopped once and asked directions from a police officer who happened to be walking towards him. The police officer, after giving directions, went on his way, obviously failing to recognize the man whom the military and police have made it a top priority to capture.

The police dismissed the photos as a hoax.

"He and his handlers have shown their mastery of graphic manipulation.

Let us not be deceived by their antics," Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, PNP spokesperson, said when asked to comment on the pictures and video.

Camp Crame commander Chief Supt. Geary Barrias said it was possible that Faeldon had sneaked into the camp without the guards noticing him.

There were no explicit orders from higher headquarters to watch out for him in Camp Crame, he said, adding that the guards do not even have a picture of Faeldon.

Renegade cop Rizal Alih still inspires fear even among Abu Sayyaf inmates

By Luige A. del Puerto

THEY SAY FAME LASTS FOR 15 minutes, but notoriety lingers.

Renegade cop Rizal Alih may have lost the fire in his eyes but he still inspires fear, even among hardened inmates – suspected members of the notorious Abu Sayyaf terror group among them – currently being held at the Philippine National Police custodial center at Camp Crame where Alih is detained.

Chief Supt. Pedro Tango, officer in charge of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said the terror suspects "have asked not to be put in the same cell with Alih."

"Do you need (proof) of how notorious this man is? Even the Abu Sayyaf is scared of him," Tango said.

Chief Supt. Geary Barrias, Camp Crame commander, said yesterday Alih was sharing a cell with one detainee. He refused to identify the cell mate and would not give details.

In January 1989, Alih led a band of disgruntled policemen and soldiers in taking over Camp Cawa-Cawa, the regional headquarters of the Philippine Constabulary in Zamboanga City.

For three days, the group held Brig. Gen. Eduardo Batalla and Col. Romeo Abendan, the camp's senior officers, hostage.

During a botched rescue operation, the two military officials and 12 renegades were killed. Alih managed to escape.

He was charged with murder but was able to make his way to Malaysia where he was arrested on unrelated weapons charges.

Alih served eight years of a 14-year sentence in a Malaysian prison. He was released last week and was deported to the Philippines.

In Alih's hometown of Zamboanga City, prosecutors want the case moved to another city, Tango said.

"The prosecutors are inclined to request for a change of venue," he said, citing security concerns. "To address their apprehension, they would rather have the trial transferred."

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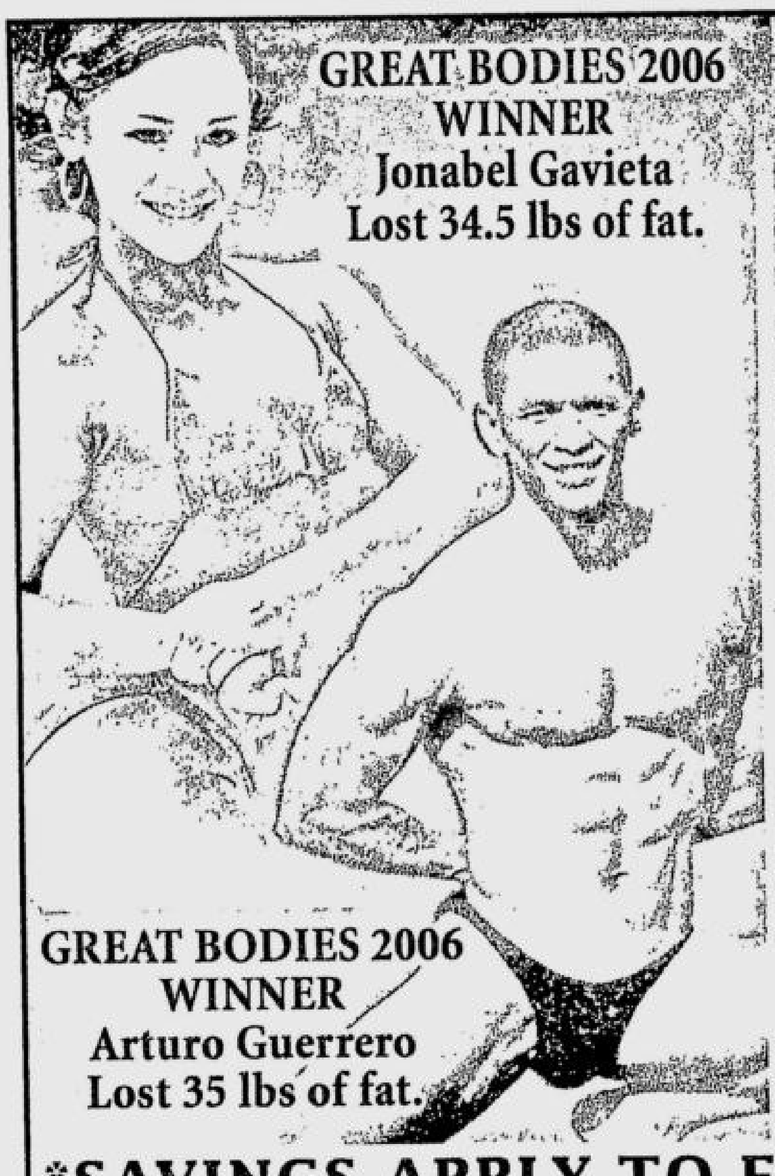

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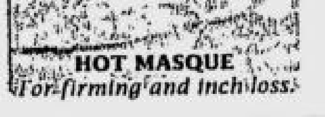
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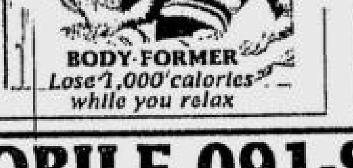
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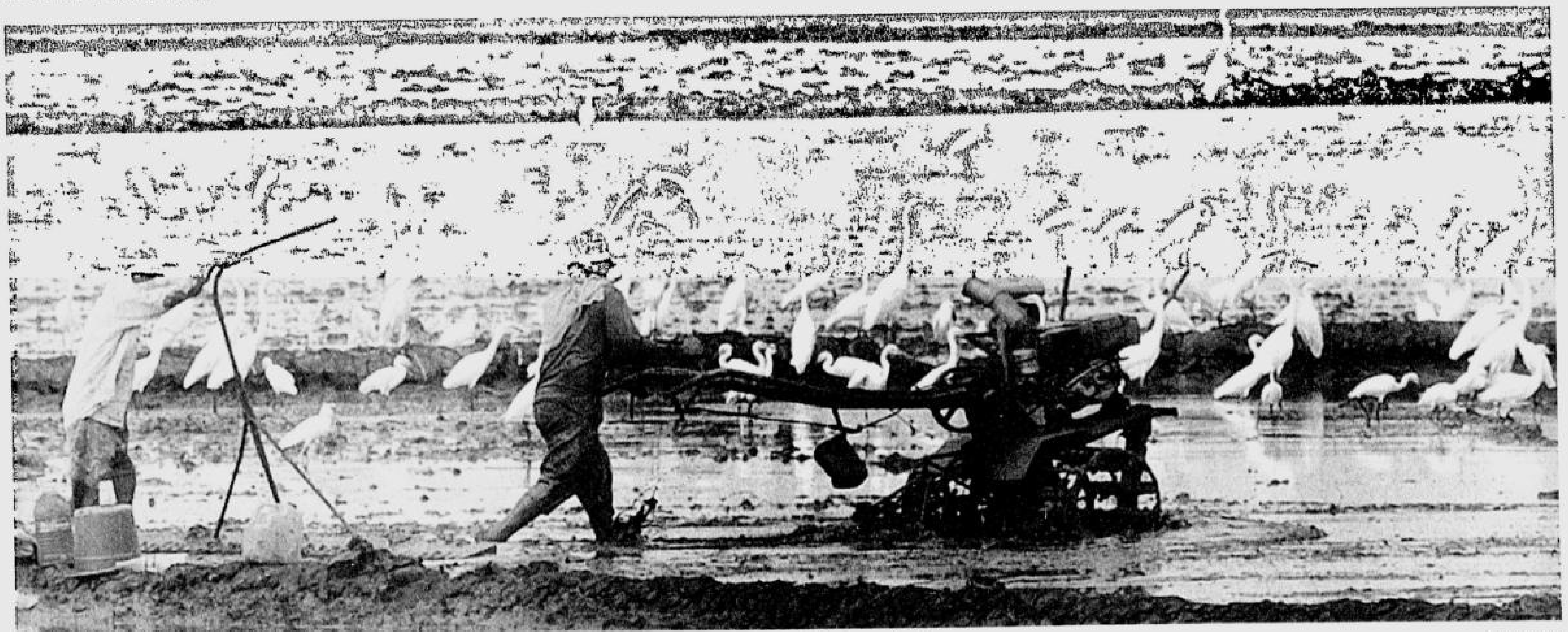

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JOAN BONDOC

Cory shuns Palace meet

From page A1

to make the supreme sacrifice of relinquishing her office," Aquino said in her statement.

"Short of that, I believe our nation would be due for protracted political turmoil."

Aquino first called on Ms Arroyo to step down in July last year at the height of the "Hello Garci" tape scandal triggered by allegations that the President had conspired with former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano to rig the results of the 2004 election.

Although Ms Arroyo, along with Garcillano, has denied the accusations, she has not—up to this day—fully explained what it was she was apologizing for when she told the nation in July "I am sorry" for what she called a lapse in judgment.

Aquino's public differences with Ms Arroyo coincided with the dispute involving the future of the Cojuangco family's Hacienda Luisita sugar estate, which the government has threatened to expropriate in order to parcel out to small sugar farmers.

The hacienda is owned by Aquino and her siblings, who are trying to block the expropriation of the land.

Trust needed

In her statement, Aquino said: "I regret that I cannot attend the Council of State meeting."

She said that while she valued the council as an institution, it could only function effectively as a top presidential advisory body "in an atmosphere of trust."

"And therein lies the problem," Aquino said. "At the heart of the crisis besetting the current administration is the fundamental issue of trust."

Aquino said Ms Arroyo's attitude of seeing conspiracies in the criticisms against her "is most unfortunate."

"This posture does nothing to restore the people's trust in the presidency and in the government," she said.

Fragile democracy

She said the country's most pressing problem was neither political nor economic in nature.

"It is a moral issue that cannot be resolved by structural or legal interventions and by government programs endorsed by the Council of State. It can only be addressed by the President herself," she said.

She also said her presence at the meeting might only create more confusion as to where she really stood.

Aquino said she believed she could best serve the people's interests by helping strengthen a fragile democracy.

"Over the short term, this entails working to restore confidence in democratic governance by advocating constitutional avenues out of the present political crisis," she said.

Mere photo op

Escudero announced his decision to boycott the Palace meeting after a minority caucus at the Sulo Hotel in Quezon City which decided that no member of the House minority would attend.

Escudero dismissed the Jan. 24 meeting as a mere "photo op" with Ms Arroyo.

The Sorsogon lawmaker, who led a failed move to impeach Ms Arroyo last year, said the meeting was supposed to advise the President on pressing national issues.

"There is no need to reiterate the issues which had long been made known to them. She is the problem—or comprises the bigger part of the problem," said Escudero.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said he hadn't made up his mind about whether to attend.

"I just received the invitation last Friday but I have not decided whether to attend or not. I'm still waiting for the agenda," he told reporters.

Drilon, an erstwhile staunch administration ally, has been the highest ranking government official to call on Ms Arroyo to resign.

New people power

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, who has also called for Ms Arroyo's resignation, and Pro Tempore Juan Flavier have indicated that they would attend out of a sense of duty and in the spirit of constructive dialogue.

Rafael Lopa, Aquino's spokesperson and nephew, said the former President had been busy working on a "new form of people power," which is empowering the microfinance groups.

"We're very active in putting up antipoverty programs and getting people more involved in micro-finance efforts," Lopa said. "She has been actually meeting with many microfinance groups. This is really a new form of people power that she wants to promote. She now wants people power put on another plane."

On the issue of Hacienda Luisita, Lopa said the matter was being handled by their lawyers.

"Tita Cory said there's a process that's still going on right now and let's see how it goes. Government has moved. We'll see what's best for the people (of the hacienda)," he said. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and TJ Burgonio*

Get real, Miriam tells House leaders

From page A1

through a people's initiative needed "a reality check." *(See related story below.)*

Santiago noted that the Supreme Court, in a 1997 case she had filed against the Commission on Elections, had ruled that a people's initiative for Charter change was illegal because Congress had not passed an enabling law.

"Until now, there is no such law. If the present Supreme Court reverses the 1997 case on the grounds of the split vote, it would be controversial. There is no factual basis for reversing the decision, because the *ratio decidendi*—the lack of an enabling law—remains the same," Santiago said.

Not necessary or beneficial

"If this Supreme Court reverses the precedent, it would embarrass itself," she added.

Santiago said she was in principle against amending the 1987 Constitution to move into the parliamentary system, because "it is not necessary, beneficial or practical."

"A parliamentary government run by *trapos* (traditional politicians) will simply mean that the *trapos* and not the people will choose our head of government. Without principled parties, the highest post will become a trophy of the highest bidder.

"I am strongly in favor of elections in 2007, as provided for by our Constitution. The pressure cooker has to let off steam," Santiago said.

"I am in favor of President Arroyo's term until 2010, because it is constitutionally mandated, except only if she is removed by the full process of impeachment, as constitutionally mandated," she added.

Senate final battleground

Sen. Joker Arroyo said the Senate would be the final battleground in the administration efforts to amend the Constitution.

Arroyo, an administration maverick, said most of the senators believed that the concurrence of at least three-fourths of the Senate was needed for the proposal to move forward—an interpretation of the Constitution the House of Representatives disagreed with.

"A negative vote in the Senate, on the simple question of whether or not to undertake any Constitutional change at all, would write finis to Cha-cha," Arroyo said.

However, if the Senate agreed to calendar a debate on what to take up, "the debates will go on till kingdom come," Arroyo said in a speech before the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines.

Diversionary ploy

"Clearly, Charter change is nothing more than a preposterous and cynical charade being peddled to the public under the semblance of an honorable disguise," he said. "The fact is it is our path to perdition."

Sen. Richard Gordon said the hasty push for Charter change was a ploy to divert public attention away from the scandals dogging Ms Arroyo.

"There's no danger of being removed for as long as she keeps her enemy occupied ... It doesn't matter to her if she gets a parliamentary government or not. Either way, she's in a win-win situation; she'll stay in power," Gordon said.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the administration was trying "to buy time."

He said Ms Arroyo was making it appear that "the corruption of this government, cheating and many other things arise from the defects in the Constitution."

Wishful thinking

"I am afraid this talk about imposing a timeline and [insisting] that the debates on Charter change be finished by March is wishful thinking on the part of Malacañang," Senate President Franklin Drilon said.

Senate Pro Tempore Juan Flavier, a die-hard Lakas party member, also opposed the no-election proposal. He said it would be difficult to push the administration timetable.

"In the first place, you don't start by saying you will abolish the Senate and then ask the Senate to collaborate," he said.

Party-list representatives yesterday filed a resolution in the House seeking to reject any move to scrap the 2007 elections to pave the way for the institution of the proposed parliamentary system. It already has 22 signatures.

Immoral, unethical

"We cannot benefit from our own decisions," said House Minority Leader Francis Escudero.

"If we agree, what will differentiate us from (Ms Arroyo) whose mandate is being questioned," he added.

Parañaque Rep. Roilo Golez, who signed the measure, said it was "immoral, unethical and illegal for members of Congress" to have "a free ride to 2010 and a seat in parliament."

The authors of the resolution included Representatives Teodoro Casiño (Bayan Muna), Deputy Minority Leader Satur Ocampo (Bayan Muna), Joel Virador (Bayan Muna), Crispin Beltran (Anakpawis), Rafael Mariano (Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas) and Liza Maza (Gabriela).

Other representatives who have signed and expressed support for the resolution included Ronaldo Zamora (San Juan), Rolex Duplico (Iloilo), Imee Marcos (Ilocos Norte), Vincent Crisologo (Quezon City), Teofisto Guingona III (Bukidnon), Benjamin Agarao (Laguna), Baisendig Dilangalen (Maguindanao) and Juan Edgardo Angara (Aurora).

Other party-list representatives who signed were Joel Villanueva (Cibac), Renato Magtubo (Sanlakas), Mujiv Hataman (Anak Mindanao), Loretta Ann Rosales (Akbayan) and Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel (Akbayan). *With reports from Daxim L. Lucas, Norman Bordadora, and Jhunnex Napallacan and Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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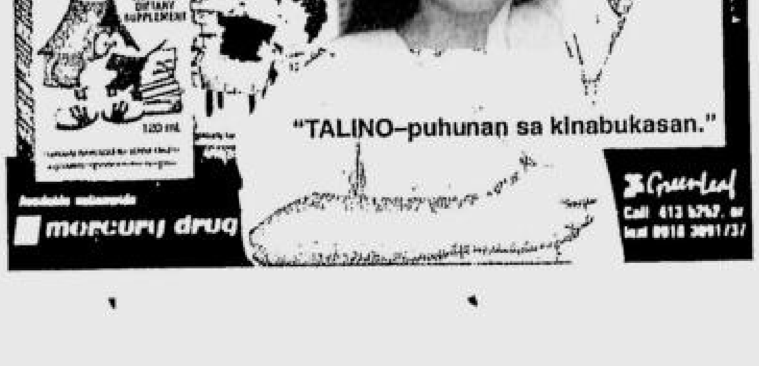

Cha-cha supporters resorting to people's initiative

From page A1

stated in Republic Act No. 6735.

In March 1997, the Supreme Court rejected the petition of the People's Initiative for Reforms, Modernization and Action (Pirma) for lack of implementing guidelines.

The sources noted that Malacañang's position was that RA 6735 sufficiently implemented the right of the people to initiate amendments to the Constitution and that this was clearly the intent of then Rep. Raul Roco when he filed House Bill No. 21505, which expressly included a people's initiative to amend the Constitution.

Interim parliament

Upholding RA 6735 would be in keeping with the spirit of the 1987 Constitution which was crafted after the euphoria of Edsa revolution and explicitly recognized the power of the people, through the system of initiatives and referenda.

The sources said the interim parliament would then tackle the other amendments to the Constitution, such as lifting equity restrictions on foreign investments in select areas and the transitory provisions.

If this pushed through, the sources said the Philippines could conceivably hold its first parliamentary elections in 2007, unless the interim parliament scrapped the 2007 elections and extended the terms of elective officials by three years.

The sources explained that Malacañang had already accepted that the Senate would not agree to be abolished, as proposed by House Speaker Jose de Venecia.

Favorable arena

They described the De Venecia formula—forming a constituent assembly to tackle Charter change—as a "constitutional coup" that was doomed to fail because of the proponent's brazen move to grab power.

The sources said that Malacañang was betting that the Supreme Court was a more favorable battleground for Charter change than the Senate.

By the end of the year, Ms Arroyo would have 11 appointees in the 15-member high court.

Although administration lawyers believe that having one item in the initiative means a "simplified approach," constitutional experts do not share this thinking.

The experts, including INQUIRER columnist Fr. Joaquin Bernas, have said that a people's initiative cannot be resorted to in a major constitutional restructuring, such as adopting the parliamentary system because of its wide ramifications.

The people's initiative is being carried out by the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines headed by Gov. Ben Evardone of Eastern Samar. Where it will get the money to do so, without Senate approval, is also an issue raised by critics.

At the 7th Triennial Conference of the Asia-Pacific Operational Research Societies at the Dusit Hotel Nikko in Makati City yesterday, Ms Arroyo reiterated her desire to pursue Charter change as part of the strategic objectives of her "ambitious but achievable" plan for the year.

People tired of politics

"The people are tired of political noise and showing mistrust on politicians but they are anticipating fundamental changes," Ms Arroyo said.

Vice President Noli de Castro said he would agree to the administration timeline if the people would approve it. De Castro joined the President in inspecting the areas cleared by authorities in preparation for the South railway rehabilitation.

"For me, it's the people who should decide, not us politicians," he said.

But De Castro advocated a strong information-education campaign, particularly on what changes are to be made to the 19-year-old Constitution. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Michael Lim Ubac*

It's Mike D's first day as GMA chief of staff

By Christine O. Avendaño

MICHAEL DEFENSOR BEGINS today his new job as Chief of Staff for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

His entry comes at a time when the Arroyo administration is set to effect Charter changes in the middle of the year.

But since his appointment papers have yet to be released sometime this week, Defensor said he considers himself an "officer in charge (OIC)."

He said he was taking an indefinite leave as Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources "pending the issuance of my appointment papers and the Executive Order defining the functions" of his new position.

"I will be handling the schedule of the President and some of her personal and official concerns," Defensor told the INQUIRER when asked about his new job, which he started two weeks ago on top of his position as DENR secretary.

He said he was responsible for the schedule of the President, attending to her flagship programs, which included poverty alleviation programs.

Two weeks ago, Defensor joined the weekly briefing of Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, and took charge of explaining the subsidized rice and noodles program as well as the relocation program of residents affected by the rehabilitation of the North and South Railways.

Yesterday, Defensor joined Ms Arroyo when she inspected the areas in the South railway that were cleared by the National Housing Authority in preparation for the modernization of the Philippine National Railway tracks.

Raps filed vs top exec in tax scam

By Nelson F. Flores

THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN LAST Friday filed graft and falsification charges against a former ranking finance official and five others in connection with the alleged granting of a tax credit certificate (TCC) to an unqualified transport company.

Acting Deputy Special Prosecutor Humphrey Monteroso accused former Finance Assistant Secretary Antonio Belicena of causing the issuance of a TCC to St. Rose Transit Inc. on Jan. 2, 1996, for the sum of P1.76 million despite discrepancies in the documents submitted by the bus firm.

St. Rose Transit reportedly claimed tax privileges for two buses it had bought from Philippine Automotive Manufacturing Corp. (Pamcor). Graft investigators found the vehicles' invoice to be spurious and their prices overstated.

The Ombudsman said Pamcor was not entitled to tax privileges because the transport firm was a dealer and not a manufacturer, hence, the purchase was not covered by the Omnibus Investment Code of 1987 which defines the parameters for the grant of a TCC.

Investigators discovered that the invoice presented to support the tax claim had in fact been issued by Pamcor not to St. Rose Transit but to Diamond Motors Corp., a Pamcor authorized dealer.

The actual date of the invoice was Oct. 26, 1994, and not July 22, 1995, as the claimant made it appear.

Also, the real price per unit was P4.25 million and not P4.89 million, the figure the tax credit claim was based on.

Prosecutors said the discrepancies were "glaring and obvious," something the accused finance officials should have known when they granted the tax privilege to St. Rose Transit.

Aside from Belicena, charged were One-Stop Shop Inter-Agency Tax Credit and Drawback Center Deputy Executive Director Uldarico Andutan, Net Local Content Center officer in charge Raul de Vera, senior tax specialist Rosanna Diala, St. Rose Transit president Aladin Simundac and a Joseph Cabotaje whose designation was not given.

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Capalla proposes setting up of bishops-mediamen's confab

By Christian V. Esguerra

ONE OF THE MOST CRITICIZED CATHOLIC Church leaders wants an unusual tie-up between bishops and members of the media.

Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla yesterday suggested the establishment of a Bishops-Mediamen's Conference, similar to the prelates' existing organization with business leaders.

Capalla made the proposal amid complaints by a number of his peers that the media were properly reporting the church hierarchy's activities and position on various issues.

Capalla himself has been criticized by some quarters, including some clergymen, for his allegedly passive stand on political issues during his term as president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines. Some critics connected this stance to his supposed close ties to President Macapagal-Arroyo, widely seen as having benefited from the CBCP's refusal to join calls for the President's resignation at the height of the "Hello Garci" scandal.

Capalla came up with the proposed conference, ostensibly convinced that a problem of "misunderstanding" existed between the media and the bishops.

Quoting Pope John Paul II's World Communications Day message in 1999, he said: "At times, relations between the Church and the media can be marred by mutual misunderstanding which breeds fear and mistrust."

In Capalla's mind, a conference would allow bishops and journalists to learn from one another.

From bishops, journalists could "learn the art of being human, of being a believer, of being a cultural person, of being a true Filipino," according to Capalla. Bishops, in turn, could "begin to know and understand the journalism profession and social communications as an important aspect of social life in a democracy."

"Through closer interaction with media practitioners, bishops can also begin to understand the constraints on reporters, for instance, or story needs of media outlets – and dovetail these with the communication needs of the Church."

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, January 17, 2006
2nd Week in Ordinary Time
Anthony, Abbot

1st Reading: 1 S 16:1-13
Gospel: Mark 2:23-28

One Sabbath he was walking through grainfields. As his disciples walked along with him, they began to pick the heads of grain and crush them in their hands. Then the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look! they are doing what is forbidden on the Sabbath!"

And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did in his time of need, when he and his men were very hungry? He went into the house of God when Abiathar was High Priest and ate the bread of offering, which only the priests are allowed to eat, and he also gave some to the men who were with him." Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is master even of the Sabbath."

Commentary

Samuel grieves for Saul, but is commanded to look for another among the sons of Jesse. He is looking into the heart of all his sons, and the last is David, the shepherd. He anoints him and the Spirit of God rushes upon him. God sees not as we see. Jesus walks through standing grain on the Sabbath and lets his disciples chew on the heads of grain. When he is rebuked he compares himself to David who fed his men when they were in need by going into the temple and taking the holy bread that belonged only to the priests. He continues by saying that the Sabbath and all the laws are made for human beings' life, and that we are not made for the laws. He calls himself the Son of Man who is lord of the Sabbath, and all life.

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Total, Seaoil also raise gas prices

By Abigail L. Ho

FOLLOWING THE LEAD OF ITS COMPETITORS, finished product importer Total (Philippines) Corp. yesterday raised the prices of its gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter and of its liquefied petroleum gas by 50 centavos per kilogram.

The increase took effect at 12:01 a.m. yesterday, the same time as Seaoil Petroleum Corp. and a day behind the other oil firms.

Total officials said prices were adjusted to "partially reflect the increase in international oil prices."

Iran's recent threat to revive its nuclear fuel research program sent shivers through the world oil market, government energy officials had said earlier.

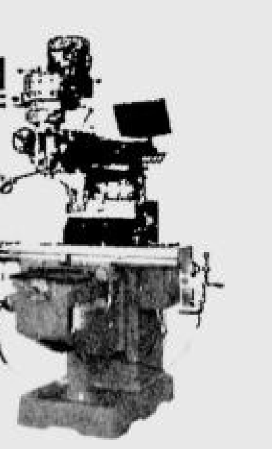
According to Department of Energy data, the regional benchmark Dubai crude jumped by close to $4 a barrel to a January average of $56.90 a barrel from last month's $53.20 a barrel.

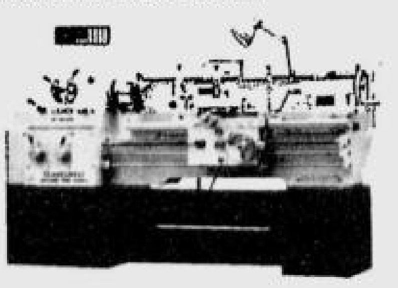
The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products had likewise surged to $66.29 in the first 13 days of January, an increase of almost $5 from the $61.01-a-barrel average posted last month.

MOPS-based diesel also skyrocketed to an average of $71.76 a barrel in the Jan. 1-13 period from $67.03 a barrel in December.

The international contract price of LPG shot up to an all-time high of $582 per metric ton (MT), rising by $44 from the December average of $538 per MT.

The price hike brings the pump prices per liter of unleaded premium gasoline to between P36.15 and P37.40, of diesel to between P29.90 and P33.65, and of kerosene to between P32.65 and P35.80. The company said diesel discounts for public utility vehicles would continue at selected Total stations.





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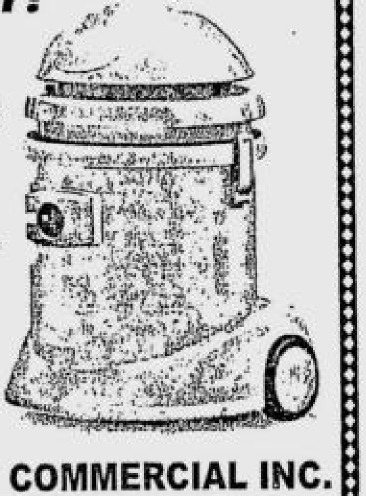

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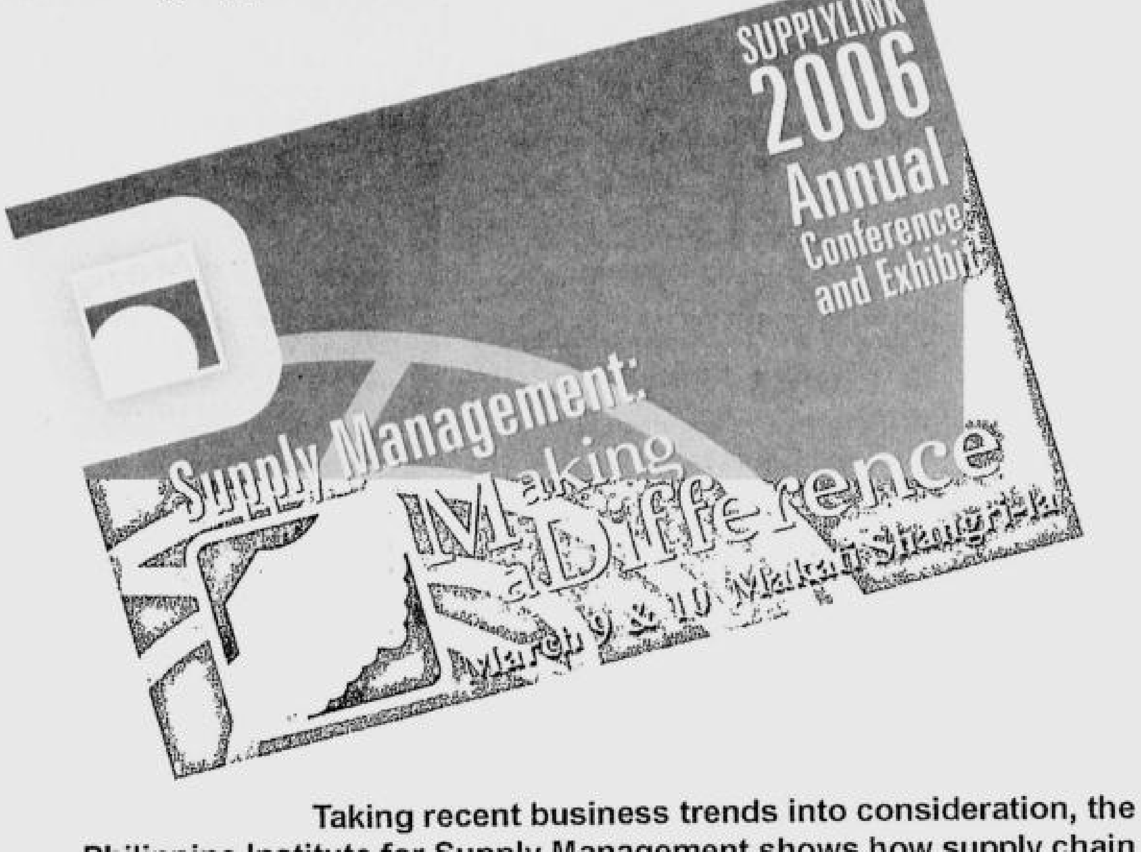

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

US senators: Don't rule out military strike on Iran

WASHINGTON—REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC SENATORS said on Sunday the United States may ultimately have to undertake a military strike to deter Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, but that should be the last resort.

"That is the last option. Everything else has to be exhausted. But to say under no circumstances would we exercise a military option, that would be crazy," Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona said on CBS's "Face the Nation."

Democratic Sen. Evan Bayh of Indiana, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said there are sensitive elements of Iran's nuclear program, which, if attacked, "would dramatically delay its development."

"But that should not be an option at this point. We ought to use everything else possible keep from getting to that juncture," he said on CNN's "Late Edition."

A growing nuclear fracas exploded last week when Iran, defying the United States and major European powers, resumed nuclear research after a two-year moratorium.

Iran says it aims only to make power for an energy-needy economy, not build atom bombs. But it hid nuclear work from the UN nuclear watchdog agency for almost 20 years before exiled dissidents exposed it in 2002.

On Sunday, Iran said that only diplomacy, not threats to refer it to the UN Security Council, could defuse a standoff over its nuclear work and warned that any Western push for sanctions could jack up world oil prices.

The Security Council's five permanent members and Germany planned talks in London on Monday on a common strategy to tackle the controversy.

McCain called the nuclear standoff "the most grave situation that we have faced since the end of the Cold War, absent the whole war on terror."

Reuters

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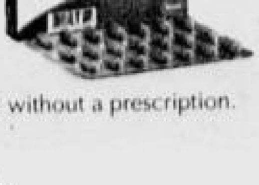

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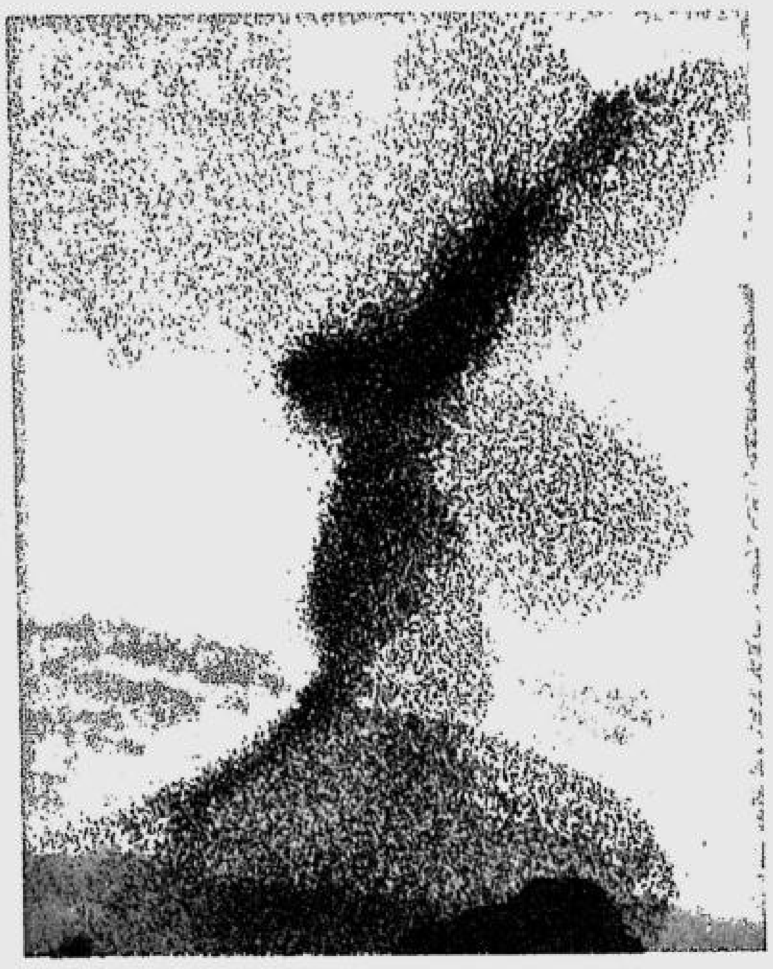

A LARGE flock of starlings flies over a park at sunset seeking an area to land for the evening, in Algiers Jan. 15. Millions of birds migrate every year, taking off from Europe and crossing into Africa. AFP

Indonesian girl dies of bird flu; 2 siblings also infected

JAKARTA—A 13-YEAR-OLD Indonesian girl died of bird flu at the weekend while two of her siblings have tested positive for the H5N1 virus, a health ministry official said on Monday, citing the results of local tests.

"We found three positive bird flu cases in one family coming from Indramayu, West Java," said Hariadi Wibisono, the ministry's director of control of animal-borne diseases.

He said this was Indonesia's fifth cluster of bird flu cases, where people living in close proximity had fallen ill.

There was no evidence of human-to-human transmission and dead chickens had been found in the neighborhood, he added.

The H5N1 virus is not known to pass easily between humans at the moment, but experts fear it could develop that ability and set off a global pandemic that might kill millions of people.

If confirmed by outside laboratories recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO), the latest cases would take total known deaths in Indonesia from avian flu to 13 and the number who have had bird flu to 20.

Wibisono said the girl died in an Indramayu hospital while her 15-year-old sister and 3-year-old brother had been sent to a hospital in Jakarta designated to care for bird flu patients.

Indramayu is 175 km east of Jakarta.

"A lot of fowls died around the neighborhood where they lived. But we don't know yet whether these fowls were carrying the virus. We sent a team there to investigate this morning," he said, adding that anyone who has had close contact with the children will be tested.

A WHO spokesperson in Jakarta said she was not aware if a team from the world body would go to Indramayu, but added WHO officials usually joined such investigations with the Health Ministry.

The highly pathogenic strain of bird flu is endemic in poultry in parts of Asia, and has affected birds in two-thirds of the provinces in Indonesia, an archipelago of about 17,000 islands and 220 million people.

The country has millions of chickens and ducks, many in the yards of rural or urban homes, raising the risk of more humans becoming infected with a virus that is confirmed to have killed 79 people in six countries since late 2003.

This includes recent cases in Turkey, the first human infections outside East Asia.

Experts say the H5N1 virus could become more active in the colder months in affected regions.

Reuters

WORLDBRIEFS

Sharon blinks while listening to tape

JERUSALEM—Ariel Sharon blinked his eyes Monday as a tape of his grandson was being played but medics said it was too early to assess its significance. A spokesperson for the Hadassah hospital said members of the family spotted the 77-year-old Israeli premier blinking. Medical sources said Sharon had appeared to shed a tear while listening to the tape. On Sunday, doctors performed a tracheotomy on Sharon in order to assist his breathing. Medical sources have been increasingly pessimistic about his chances of making a recovery the longer he remained in a coma. Chief neurosurgeon Dr. Felix Umansky said Sunday patience was needed and the tracheotomy was not a sign his condition was worsening. *AFP*

Bomb attack kills Canadian envoy

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan—A Taliban bomb attack on a Canadian military convoy killed a Canadian diplomat and at least two Afghans in the heart of the southern Afghan city of Kandahar on Sunday, officials said. Canadian officials said it appeared the convoy of armored vehicles was attacked by a suicide bomber, and that three soldiers were wounded. The diplomat, 59-year-old Glyn Berry, was a veteran foreign affairs official who was posted to Afghanistan last August. *Reuters*

Osama has 'ceased to be important'

MADRID—Fugitive al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden has "ceased to be important," with the movement he created posing a far greater threat, respected British Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk told Spanish daily El Pais in an interview published Sunday. "To look for Bin Laden now is as useful as detaining nuclear scientists after the creation of the atomic bomb," said Fisk, who will visit Spain on Tuesday to publicize a new book on the region. "Bin Laden has ceased to be important," insisted Fisk, who has interviewed the Saudi-born terror mastermind three times. "Yet we are still following the Hollywoodesque vision of the existence of Bin Laden. Is he alive? When will they catch him?" opined Fisk, correspondent with The Independent newspaper. "Bin Laden created al-Qaida. His work is done. Would it change anything if he were captured?" Fisk asked rhetorically. *AFP*

'Dead man' walking triggers panic

NEW DELHI—An Indian man believed dead by his family and fellow villagers caused panic when he returned over fears he had come back as a ghost, the Times of India reported on Monday. Children screamed "Ghost! Ghost!" and villagers locked their doors when Raju Raghuvanshi returned from jail earlier this month to his village in Mandla district in the central state of Madhya Pradesh. Raghuvanshi's brothers, who had shaved their heads to mourn his death in line with Hindu tradition, fled when he appeared, the paper reported. Villagers and family members have ostracized him, forcing Raghuvanshi to file a complaint with local police. The village council has demanded he prove he is not a ghost, but the paper did not say what kind of proof the elders wanted. *Reuters*

Socialist elected Chile's first woman president

SANTIAGO, CHILE—CHILE ELECTed socialist Michelle Bachelet to be its first woman president on Sunday, making her only the second woman elected to head a South American state as Latin America cements a shift to the left.

With almost all votes counted, Bachelet, from Chile's ruling center-left coalition, won 53 percent of ballots cast while opposition candidate Sebastian Pinera took 47 percent, the government Electoral Service said.

Bachelet, 54, a medical doctor imprisoned and tortured during the 1973-1990 Augusto Pinochet dictatorship before living in exile abroad, will be the fourth consecutive president from the center-left alliance that has run Chile since 1990.

"Violence came into my life, destroying what I loved, because I was a victim of hate," Bachelet told tens of thousands of confetti-tossing supporters along the main boulevard in downtown Santiago.

"I have dedicated my life to reversing that hate and converting it into understanding, tolerance and, why not say it, love."

A former defense minister, Bachelet is only the second woman elected to head a South American nation after Janet Jagan of Guyana was chosen to succeed her husband as president in 1997 after he died.

"I feel emotional, happy. We are breathing the air of liberty and unity," said Ana Paredes, 37, a hotel employee who said she spontaneously decided to join Bachelet revelers.

The celebration extended well into the night with jubilant supporters honking their car horns and shaking giant flags.

Bachelet, an agnostic with three children from two relationships, benefited from a shift to more secular values in Chile, which until recently had a reputation as one of the region's most socially conservative countries.

She pledged during her victory speech to bring more social equality to Chile by the time her four-year term ends in 2010, with social security and equal educational opportunities for all. "I want my government to be remembered as a government for everybody," she said.

Political scientist Ricardo Israel said a main challenge for her will be to bring more women into public office, and to find a place for her social-democratic coalition within the range of leftist governments taking hold in Latin America.

Israel said she would have to balance the need to maintain good global relations, particularly with the United States so Chile can keep benefiting from global free trade, while guaranteeing a steady natural gas supply from its neighbors.

A Bachelet victory consolidates a shift to the left in Latin America, where leftists now run Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Venezuela, some with politics more extreme than others. A socialist will soon take office in gas-rich Bolivia, and leftist Evo Morales is favored to win Mexico's July presidential election.

Reuters

PRESIDENT-ELECT
Michelle Bachelet REUTERS

Brain chemical could be useful in fighting obesity

PARIS—SCIENTISTS IN THE UNITED STATES say they have identified a compound in the brain that appears to play a key role in the drive to eat and could prove a useful weapon in the combat against obesity.

The chemical, a fatty acid called malonyl coenzyme A, is produced in the hypothalamus—a part of the brain which receives signals from the digestive system about the body's nutritional state and which initiates the desire to eat or stop eating.

The team used a deactivated cold virus to deliver into the brains of lab rats an enzyme that degrades malonyl coenzyme A.

Levels of the fatty acid fell, prompting the rats to gobble up more food and become obese, roughly doubling in body weight over the course of the 18-week experiment.

The implication is that people who have insufficient levels of malonyl coenzyme A may become unrestrained eaters, according to the study, which is published online on Sunday in the specialist journal Nature Neuroscience.

Boosting levels of it could help them to eat moderately, it suggests.

The authors are led by Luciano Rossetti of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York.

The research adds to previous studies, all in the early phase, that have pinpointed hormones that suppress or stimulate appetites. *AFP*

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OPINION

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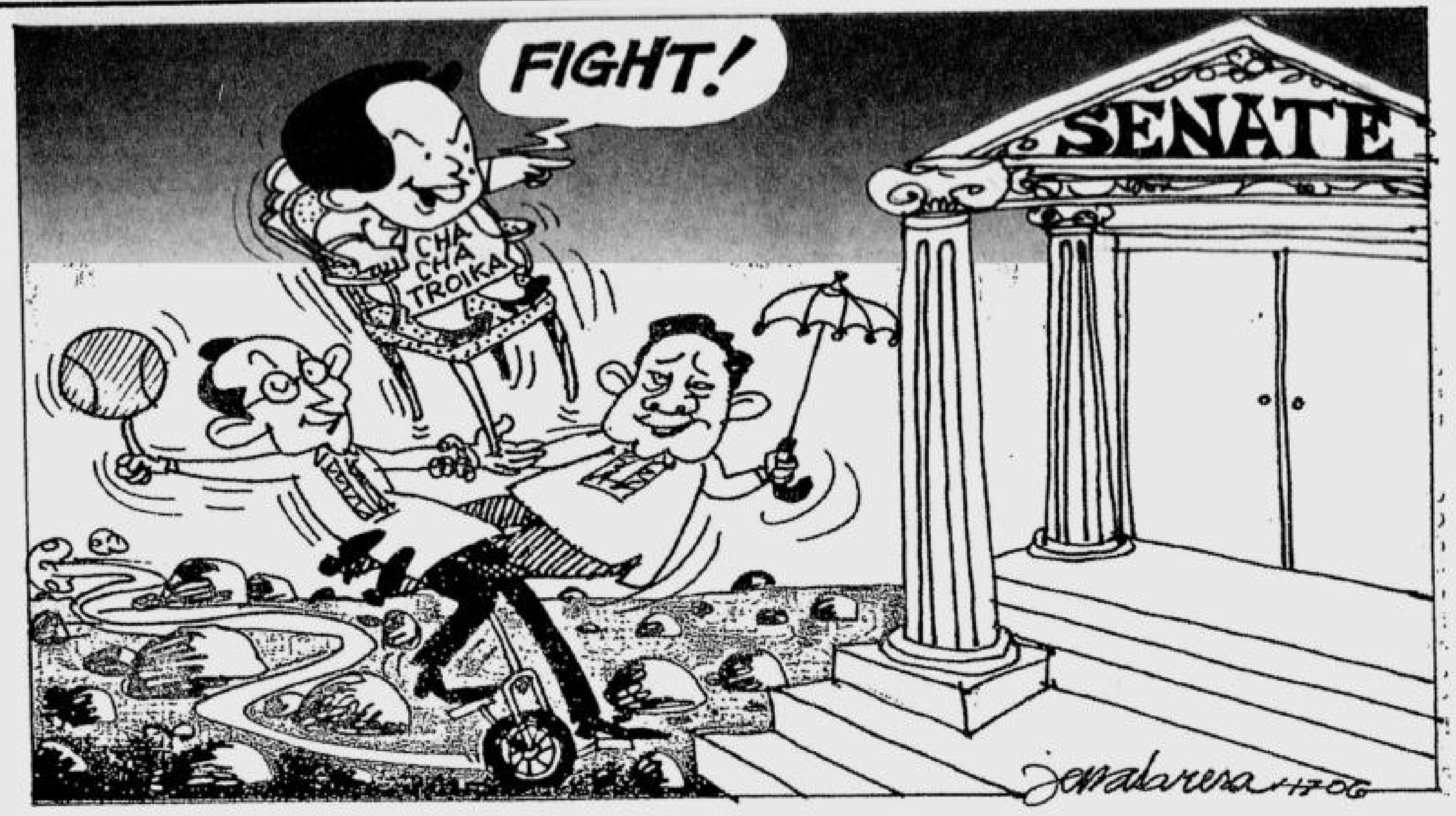

Medical tourism

EDITORIAL

THE MEDICAL TOURISM PROGRAM LAUNCHED last week may yet help relieve the brain drain in the health professionals sector and at the same time earn a lot of dollars for the country. But the program has to be well managed to ensure that it does not adversely affect the health program for poor Filipinos and result in the exploitation of people ready to sell parts of their body for money.

Health Undersecretary Jade del Mundo has said that the program would put the Philippines on the world stage of medical tourism. India, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore are ahead of the Philippines in medical tourism, but it should not be difficult for the country to catch up, given the competent health professionals it has, its international image as a caring and compassionate nation and its very reasonable and competitive medical rates. Also a plus is the fact that most of our health professionals are proficient in English.

A heart bypass here costs only about P500,000, or about half the price abroad. A kidney transplant costs P3 million, or less than half the rate in other Asian or Western countries. Even cosmetic surgical procedures are cheaper here. For example, blepharoplasty, which widens the contours of Asian eyes, would cost about P500,000 in Japan and South Korea, but only P150,000 in the Philippines.

Medical tourism has a dual purpose: people would visit another country to get medical treatment and enjoy a vacation in the process. This new kind of tourism promises to be a lucrative dollar earner for the Philippines. Dr. Joseph James Joaquino, a plastic surgeon, said that in Thailand in 2004 the medical tourism industry drew 600,000 foreign tourists and earned nearly $500 million for the country.

Tourists would be ready to pay high professional fees, and so doctors, nurses and other medical professionals who are thinking of working abroad could be convinced to stay in the Philippines. Later they could pool their savings and set up clinics and hospitals of their own. Other doctors and nurses already working abroad could be enticed to return to the country if they could earn better pay so that they could be near their families at the same time.

The medical tourism program could also help promote indigenous medical and therapeutic practices, such as *hilot*. This type of Filipino massage has therapeutic benefits and, properly promoted, could compete with the world-famous Thai massage.

There are certain caveats, however. The Alliance of Health Workers, through a spokesperson, said that the program, which would offer world-class health care to foreigners, could aggravate the neglect of poor Filipino patients. Millions of them now have to content themselves with substandard treatment and obsolete equipment in government hospitals and clinics.

Another danger is that the program could result in the "mutilation" of hundreds, if not thousands, of poor Filipinos who would sell kidneys and other vital organs for big sums of money. In 2003, 420 kidney transplants were done locally. About 250 of the kidneys came from donors not related to the recipients, and most of the donors were paid. The selling of kidneys is a booming business in Rizal Park, Bacood and Baseco compound in Manila, Novaliches in Quezon City and Addition Hills in Mandaluyong, according to Dr. Angeles Tan Alora, a bioethics expert.

What if the donors who are left with only one kidney each later suffer kidney failure? Would not the government and society spend more to solve the new problem?

What makes medical tourism an attractive program all over the world is the money. Del Mundo, citing figures from the International Trade Center Geneva, said that the global medical tourism industry earns about $20 billion a year. The Philippine government expects to earn $300 million in the first year of operation of the medical tourism program and $1 billion a year for the next five years.

If the program does stem the brain drain in the health professionals sector and brings in the tourist dollars, well and good. But safeguards have to be taken to ensure that it does not result in the neglect of poor Filipino patients and in the exploitation of poor people who might be enticed to give up some of their vital organs in exchange for dollars.

More bang for the buck

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

DID THE BANG MATCH THE BUCKS? THEY did in Bacolod City, Jordan in Guimaras and Carcar in Cebu. That's where the local governments delivered in programs to tackle malnutrition that devastate vulnerable kids in poverty-strapped families. A new Philippine Women's University study reached that conclusion after analyzing the cost-effectiveness of government's six year (1998–2004) "Early Childhood Development Project."

No one dies of starvation here. But many shrivel from chronic hunger and diseases like tuberculosis or blindness. One out of three of over 9.1 million school kids are underweight, nutrition surveys show.

Protein energy malnutrition ushers more Filipino pre-school children to premature graves than in lower-income countries like Bangladesh, Kenya or Tanzania, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank noted in a joint study, "Early Childhood Development."

PWU surveyed 17 of the first 132 LGUs that signed up to provide quick and sustained delivery of services, from food enrichment packages to day-care workers. "It takes a village to raise a child," the African proverb says.

Dr. Romeo Gecolea, Winona Pasimio, Nenita Cura and Ligaya Braganza interviewed 1,200 mothers, caregivers and local officials to determine: (a) do families seek such services? (b) were they cost-effective? and (c) can they be sustained?

"This ... is one of the best investments government made in the last decade," says Dr. Geoclea. "It delivered life-saving and development-enhancing services" for school children in areas afflicted by scandalously high death rates and ill health.

"LGUs plowed in substantial proportions of their meager internal revenue allotments or pork barrel to keep services for their children going," adds this former United Nations Development Program official.

"Virtually all who enter Grade 1 were benefited by the Curriculum Enrichment module and demand was high," the study found.

But Day Care Mother services smashed into a cultural wall. Filipino parents entrust infants and very young children only to immediate relatives. So, only 2 percent used a project where volunteers care for children while their mothers worked.

"Adam and Eve had many advantages, but the principal one was they escaped teething," Mark Twain once joked. But multiple health needs of children are a major concern for mothers. Seven out of 10 sought rural health midwives for vaccination, breast-feeding, use of fortified foods, etc.

The most cost-effective health packages, where each child got four vaccines, were: Bacolod City at P10.22 per child and Jordan, Guimaras, at P30.29. Least cost-effective were Iligan City, at P1,287.99 per child; Alimodian, Iloilo, at P297.53; and Kidapawan City in Cotabato at P140.10.

For a kid to get Vitamin A and iron supplements in Jordan, Guimaras, cost P21.60 and in Carcar, Cebu, P33.38. But in Iligan, Lanao del Norte, the bill was P799.05 per child, and in Alimodian, Iloilo, P268.96.

The study found that 79 percent of mothers "spent their own money to avail themselves of these packages." The average expenditure was P7,738.17 per household.

The breakdown indicates the priorities of families: (a) P6,213.12 for micronutrient supplements and fortified foodstuff; (b) P1,433.84 for Day Care Centers; and (c) P91.21 for vaccination, neonatal care, etc.

Similar variations occurred in per head cost. "Most cost-effective, by this indicator, were projects in Bacolod City at P16.83 per capita; Cadiz City, at P27.75; and Jordan at P33.88." In contrast, "LGUs with the highest costs were Lala, Lanao del Norte, at P532.81 per capita; Alimodian, Iloilo, at P227.65, and Pilar, Capiz, at P202.41."

Implementation rates differed too. "Gung-ho" Kidapawan City in Cotabato notched up over 100 percent. Ten of the 17 LGUs started their programs only after 2000.

"The three highest implementation rates were achieved by Kidapawan, Cotabato, at 115 percent; Buenavista, Guimaras, at 89 and Passi City, Iloilo, at 69," the report notes. "Lowest implementation rates were registered by Cadiz City at 33 percent and Tagbilaran City at 37."

How much LGUs spend differs, too. Bais City allocated P11.63 million, while Jordan spent the lowest at P1.07 million. In Lanao del Norte, Iligan City spent P10.5 million and Lala P7.2 million, while Banga, Aklan, disbursed P2.3 million.

Seven LGUs had "unclassified costs" that exceeded 10 percent of the total bill: Cadiz City and Banga, Aklan, over 45 percent; Sibalom, Antique, 40 percent; Balete, Aklan, 23 percent; Passi, Iloilo, 17 percent; Pilar, Capiz, 12 percent; and Buenavista, Guimaras, 11 percent.

Future early childhood projects need to improve their information reporting systems, And there's need to use mass communications better. Above all, effective ways adopted by Bacolod, Jordan and Carcar should be replicated.

LGUs can sustain programs for their own deprived children. Some beefed up their counterparts from "pork barrel" funds, bilateral or NGO aid, and barangay revenues. Except for the mayor of Buenavista, all agreed that they could carry on programs for the vulnerable kids even after national funds are cut.

These deprived kids are more important than those strutting politicians. "If you bungle raising your children," Jacqueline Kennedy once said, "whatever else you do will not matter very much."

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

Still, deeply upright, deeply crooked

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

PAMPANGA REP. FRANCIS L. NEPOMUCENO, chair of the House committee on civil service and professional regulation, has an interesting proposal. He wants the NTC to revoke the franchise of Sky Cable, which is owned by the Lopezes. The reason for this is that Channel 53 of Sky Cable airs the Jerry Springer Show, one recent episode of which showed a number of women pulling up their blouses to expose huge breasts and men pulling down their trousers and exposing their buttocks. Nepomuceno finds this "obscene," and wants the MTRCB as well to ban the show immediately.

My first thought upon reading this item was to marvel at how far afield our intrepid congressman has gone in his wanderings in the wilds of cable TV. I confess to being a little less adventurous in that respect, confining my attention to the news and sports channels. I barely glance at HBO and the other movie channels. If I want to watch a movie, I slip in a DVD, the ones from Quiapo, in particular, having improved vastly in clarity of picture (and sound) and sophistication of titles. But now that Nepomuceno has mentioned it, I will switch to Channel 53 and other stations one of these days to see for myself the hidden cornucopia of earthly delights, er hellish scourges, that awaits, or lurks, there, the better to help the congressman in his research.

Somehow, when I read that item, I had this image of him enduring the obscenity with fortitude in an earnest desire to aid legislation, refusing with a tenacity known only to Javert to switch channels at the first assault of humongous breasts to take in the second furious wave of wiggling asses. I can only sympathize with him. Certainly, no one can accuse him of taking his duties lightly.

But I wouldn't have given this more than passing thought if I did not remember that a couple of months ago Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman also sought to stamp out an obscenity in this country. That is motels and similar establishments with fancier names offering occupancy for abbreviated hours, or what everybody calls "short time." I do not now recall Lagman's exact words. What I do recall is his outrage and indignation that such things should exist in this country, "short time" being, he said, an aid, or encouragement, to illicit affairs.

He wanted the practice stopped, spreading as it did the plague of immorality upon the land. He wanted "short time" abolished from the face of the earth, or at least Metro Manila, and establishments offering the same to be shut down and their owners given long time in prison.

I wouldn't have given that more than passing thought either if I did not remember that government and church officials periodically complain about movie and TV fare, and more recently about the ads in the media, including the billboards that now bedeck, or obstruct, the capital city's skyline. The complaints normally have to do with the suggestive poses of the models there, or the same models' obsession to show their bodies in the near-pristine state God made them.

Being near-blind to ads (I don't know but for some reason I completely overlook them in newspapers and TV), I must confess I have not noticed a marked increase in the quantity and quality of the, well, boldness. I do know that FHM and rival publications are competing ferociously in the skin trade, but have not given much thought to it, knowing that bolder stuff is easily available in, and accessible through, the Internet. And who can navigate their way there with the skill and boldness of Columbus than the kids?

But I will not go into whether pornography is besieging us and constitutes a dire threat. I am just amazed that the officials above should espy obscenity in nubile bodies, in suggestive poses or not, and sex, illicit or not, and fail to be assailed by a more humongous obscenity that stares us in the face and constitutes the greatest scourge this country has ever been threatened with.

At the time Lagman complained of what "short time" in motels was doing to the morals of the youth, or not-so-youth, he had just helped mightily to stop a usurper in Malacañang from being removed. He and the votes-for-hire in Congress conspired to defeat a move to impeach GMA, for which (mis)deed he was dropped by the Liberal Party from its roster. Indeed, at the time he excoriated "short time," his daughter had just been named by Archbishop Oscar Cruz's witnesses as a beneficiary of *jueteng*.

Indeed, at the time all of them were complaining about these obscenities, the arguments in defense of the usurper in Malacañang had sunk to, "So GMA cheated in the elections, so what?," which was being peddled in media as though it were the most natural thing in the world. Nestor Torre would observe the effects of this thinking in the entertainment world. A couple of weeks ago, he reported that musicians who were accused of plagiarism had this ready argument: "We did not do it. But even if we did, so what?" In this country, disrobing in public and exchanging body fluids in private has become a crime, but stealing the vote and passing other people's work as one's own has become a yawn.

I remember that one of the first things Marcos did after he declared martial law was to shut down the publications that exposed female bodies along with the publications that exposed his wrongdoing, and the bold movies that proliferated then, which ended Merle Fernandez's (the original bold star), well, budding, career. And the martial-law government proclaimed victoriously that at last this country had rid itself of all obscenity.

You couldn't have had anything more deeply upright and more deeply crooked then. You can't have anything more deeply upright and more deeply crooked now.

Senators concerned with self-preservation

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

YESTERDAY'S INQUIRER BANNER STORY SAID it all. It quoted Sen. Joker Arroyo as saying that the Lakas "troika" of leaders "mistakenly believes that senators would agree to write their own obituary." It's obvious that some senators are stonewalling the growing clamor for Charter change because their chamber would face extinction. Their instinct for self-preservation and survival is blinding them to the merits of the system that has more following around the world than the one we have.

This week, the Senate makes an effort to address Charter change, with hearings commencing in Sen. Richard Gordon's committee on electoral laws and constitutional amendments. The issues are House resolution calling for a constituent assembly and a Senate resolution calling for a constitutional convention. I suspect, however, that such moves would be token and the hearings would be interminable. The senators also know there are no funds for a constitutional convention, what with three elections scheduled for next year. But they could find themselves isolated from the rest of the country.

* * *

The absence from the national directorate caucus of six Lakas senators—Juan Flavier, Pia Cayetano, Ramon Magsaysay Jr., Richard Gordon, Ramon Revilla and Lito Lapid—was not just a "bad omen," as House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles put it. With the six not offering any explanation for not showing up, it's a clear signal that they don't want to go against the sentiment of their colleagues. This is shortsighted thinking, though, for under the proposed changes, both chambers would give way to a single legislature that will be less expensive and more dynamic and proactive. Nothing can prevent the senators from running for the nicameral legislature, especially those with district backing, such as Edgardo Angara, Juan Ponce Enrile, Aquilino Pimentel, Manuel Villar, Ralph Recto and Lito Lapid. We hope they will be more open to Charter change.

* * *

Having just one legislative chamber is the most popular argument for a shift to a parliamentary/unicameral form. Right now we citizens are footing a very expensive bill to maintain the two chambers: for the House with 236 members, P2.8 billion, and for the Senate with 24 members, P1.6 billion. The P4.4 billion does not include their pork barrel with P200 million going to every senator and P40 million to every House member.

Just as bad is the gridlock perpetually afflicting both chambers, as shown by the fact that the Senate passed only four bills last year. Such gridlock happens between the executive and the legislative branches in a presidential system, unlike in a parliamentary system where members of the Cabinet come from parliament. This explains why in countries that have a parliamentary the delivery of programs is much faster and more efficient.

There is also need to reform some economic provisions of the 1987 Constitution to put us on a more competitive footing with our neighbors in Southeast Asia. Over 50 years of the presidential system have failed to take us out of economic underdevelopment.

* * *

With the Senate determined to block Charter change, its proponents, led by President Macapagal-Arroyo and Speaker Jose de Venecia, have firmed up various plans to push it. Other political parties and groups are being sought out for support, including the Nationalist People's Coalition under Deputy Speaker Emilio Espinosa and Reps. Gilbert Teodoro, Jesli Lapus and Frisco San Juan; Kampi under Reps. Luis Villafuerte, Vic Sumulong and Ronaldo Puno; the Liberal Party faction under Mayor Joselito Atienza; and the Social Democrats led by National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzalez. Various members of civil society are also gearing for the Cha-cha campaign.

* * *

For the proponents, the timetable is to have the seven constitutional amendments approved in last Saturday's Lakas caucus pushed either through a constituent assembly or a people's initiative. This means continuing the massive information drive kicked off by the Constitutional Consultative Commission, this time spearheaded by local government officials. Between June 7 to 15, a plebiscite is proposed to be held wherein the people will be asked to answer if they approve the amendments and if they want the elections of all parliamentary members in May 2007 or May 2010. The plebiscite questions, if answered in the affirmative, would result in the abolition of Congress and the emergence of an interim parliament whose members would be drawn from Congress. By 2007 or 2010, depending on what the people approve, the election of members of the new parliament would take place and the president will be reduced to a "ceremonial leader" as the prime minister wields real power.

* * *

With their "never-say-die-spirit," the proponents will move Charter change simultaneously on two fronts: in Congress, through efforts to convene as a constituent assembly, and at the grassroots, through a people's initiative by gathering 5 million signatures that will represent 12 percent of all registered voters, with at least 3 percent coming from each legislative district. Both moves, however, face difficult roadblocks. The constituent assembly needs both the House and the Senate to get into the act—either voting jointly by a ¾ vote or separately, as intended by the drafters of the Constitution, as some legal luminaries argue. This issue could end up in the Supreme Court.

On the other hand, the people's initiative to be spearheaded by various organizations of local officials could also be blocked in the SC. Recall that the effort of Pirma to launch a similar people's initiative in 1997 was thrown out by a vote of 8-6 and later 7-7 because of the absence of an enabling law. Significantly, two justices who voted favorably for Pirma are still in the Court: Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban and Justice Reynato Puno.

Hope and health from far away

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THOUGH I PUT IN SOME CAUTIONARY WORDS about medical missions in a recent column on "medical tourism," the truth is that these may sometimes be necessary in a health environment, such as that obtaining here, with a severe shortage of health professionals, inadequate health infrastructure and massive poverty.

And if these medical missions are carried out by groups like the Philippine-American Group of Educators and Surgeons Pages, based in New Jersey, then such charitable endeavors would surely be of help in alleviating the poor health conditions of the populace.

In a recent issue of The Filipino Reporter, news editor Edmund Silvestre featured the organization that, he says, he learned about only by accident. "The group—composed of successful Filipinos who are either retired or simply have made this mission a public service commitment—is really a role model for Filipino organizations across the US and maybe the world. For the past 15 years, they (have worked) hard and (worked) quietly and have no time for petty quarrels or bickering or jealousy which normally mar many organizations here."

Pages, says Silvestre, launches medical missions in the Philippines every year and donates medical equipment to various public hospitals here, mostly in rural areas in Luzon and the Visayas. In fact, the next Pages mission has been scheduled for next month in Bay, Laguna, and in Cavite.

Following are excerpts from Silvestre's article in The Filipino Reporter:

* * *

EAST ORANGE, N.J.—Vid Figueras knows he cannot save the world, but his humanitarian group known as Pages—Philippine American Group of Educators and Surgeons—has treated over 6,000 Filipino children and young adults for the past 15 years through its Operation HOPE (Helping Other People Excel).

"Our main goal is simply to help, without expecting anything in return," Figueras, founding chair, said as he and fellow volunteers inventoried a two-story warehouse full of donated medical items that will be shipped to the Philippines ... in time for their February 2006 medical mission in Bay, a third-class municipality in Laguna, with 15 poor barangays.

"The Philippines is in crisis and many people there need assistance," said Figueras, a native of Imus, Cavite, and who is also special assistant to the Cavite governor (Ayong Maliksi) on health issues. "I have seen the extent of the health crisis there and one way to help ease the problem is by doing what I call a mass production of help."

The large warehouse, located within a private East Orange, New Jersey, compound owned by retired engineer and Pages supply coordinator Douglas Malazzo, houses hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of medicines and medical equipment, including a dozen used anesthesia machines worth $50,000 each, examination tables, electric wheelchairs, dental chairs, and operating room lights that will eventually go to needy provincial or municipal hospitals.

"So far, we have donated 20 anesthesia machines to several hospitals, and numerous other equipment as well, donated by groups like SOS and the Doctor Dealer Foundation," Figueras said.

The warehouse also keeps boxes of medical books, canned goods, and all kinds of stuffed toys used to comfort children who will undergo surgery. Beside the warehouse is a large (cargo) container filled with more donated items like surgical gloves, suction catheter, antibiotics and other medicines.

"We have enough supply here," Figueras assured. "We can even supply medical gloves to the entire Philippines if we want to."

* * *

OPERATION HOPE was inspired by the international program called "Operation Smile," of which Figueras, a registered nurse, was a member since 1983, along with American surgeons that go to different poor countries to offer free medical services.

Figueras said that when "Operation Smile" stopped its Philippine program for two years in (the 1990s) due to political and peace and order problems, he formed Pages and its Operation HOPE, as well as Operation Grace (food and gift-giving during missions); and Operation Education (seminars and teaching sessions for medical students and practitioners, including nurses).

Over the years, Pages managed to attract—often by word of mouth—not only Filipino-American physician volunteers but also their American and British counterparts.

One of them is Dr. Peter Ayliffe, a world-renowned British reconstructive surgeon, who's been involved with the group for the past six years.

"These are respectable plastic surgeons and educators who earn good money," Figueras said. "They do pure volunteer work and pay their own way to the Philippines every year ... operating nonstop from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. for five straight days a week."

Pages is supported by three businessmen-philanthropists—a Chinese, a Jew and an American—who believe in the group's noble cause. "But no names please," Figueras requested. "These are very private people who regularly assist people from poor nations."

Donations of medical supplies come from foundations and medical groups and individuals from places like Ohio, Kentucky, South Carolina, New Jersey and New York, as well as hospitals which upgrade their equipment and donate the used ones to Pages.

Figueras said all donated medical equipment are evaluated by a US-trained biomedical engineer before being put to use.

"Donations that come from three states alone can fill up two 40-foot containers," Figueras said. The latest donors were Dr. Mark Kaster of Toms River Community Hospital in South Jersey, who gave nine used anesthesia machines; and Nanding and Mila Mendez, producers of the annual Philippine Fiesta in New Jersey, who donated $4,000.

(More tomorrow)

Romance of old houses

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

DURING ONE OF MY OUT-OF-TOWN TRIPS TO do research on the province of Batangas, I was asked by my guide what I found interesting about dilapidated old houses that were falling apart. Of course, I told her about hardwood and how it was difficult to come by these days as well as the intricacy of the carvings that would cost a fortune to have made today. I didn't say that one has to have a fanciful turn of mind, not quite grounded in reality because I was afraid she would laugh.

With a creak of a floorboard or the sigh of the wind in the old trees in the yard, old houses whisper of past lives. They speak of children scurrying up the stairs, of servants cooking in clay *kalans*, of kitchen floors made of bamboo slats and of forgotten architects whose names will never now be known. Who are these ghosts of the past?

You may find some answers in the architectural section of archival documents or in last wills and testaments, perhaps in 19th century magazines like La Ilustracion Filipina. Unfortunately for us, there is no way to check today whether those architectural drawings ever became a reality, considering that what wasn't bombed during the war we decided to demolish. Manila, despite being the oldest capital, isn't exactly friendly toward the past. There are some inventories of household goods in last wills and testaments kept in the National Archives, but since the houses are all gone, there's no way for us to imagine what their interiors looked like.

Perhaps the province may prove easier than Manila since the chain of ownership may still be traced in public records or last wills or even oral reminiscences of relatives and old neighbors that may tell you about family feuds or inventories of furnishings. But don't you find it amazing how few families have kept albums of photographs or old letters or even old recipes?

Since we are a superstitious people, any house that has a reputation of being haunted (and this doesn't even have to be 100 years old) has less of a chance of being sold. Or if it is, it would be torn down and a new one constructed on its site. Unlike the British who actually make a business of haunted houses for tourism purposes (note the Tower of London), many of us won't even watch scary movies.

We lived in a house in Sta. Mesa after the war, where it was claimed one could hear the iron chains that bound the original owner and even see where his blackened feet (from the fires of hell) left their mark on the wide narra boards. Needless to say, I don't remember seeing anything, but it made me a very obedient child indeed when it was bedtime. Come to think of it, I never asked what the poor man was supposed to have done to deserve such a fate that when the family was saying a nine-day novena, his voice was supposedly heard saying that their prayers were useless.

Most houses may lack the drama of ghosts and secret staircases (although there is said to be one in the American ambassador's residence in Baguio that allegedly goes down to a tunnel). I also have not heard of anyone finding money stashed away behind the *tabique Pampango* (although it's possible that whoever found it may not necessarily broadcast it). But this doesn't mean that such stories are dry and boring.

There was the old Arnedo house in Apalit that I found by following the old McArthur Highway and the Pampanga River. Reading the description of the house in Felix Roxas' articles, I wondered where the Bentwood chairs used during balls had gone and where was the porcelain that their guests had used. Old people said the main house had been gutted by fire and the one where we stood was merely a guest house. The belongings had long been divided among the heirs.

Among the houses on R. Hidalgo Street in Manila was one where a former tenant said you could hear the patter of children's feet on the stairs. He went on to tell how his brother saw a shadow in the azotea raise a cigarette to his mouth.

I was so delighted that I immediately thought a ghost tour of R. Hidalgo would be a huge success. But Butch Zialcita put a damper on my enthusiasm by telling me that Filipinos do not appreciate ghosts. I still haven't figured that one out, especially since other countries even offer tours of cemeteries. Of course, we've got one of the Chinese in La Loma but that's not quite the same thing.

Then there was a *bahay na bato* in a town in Laguna parts of which were burnt during the Revolution. Many of its furnishings, however, were saved as well as the main living room and massive staircase leading to the second story and the black and white marble tiles of the azotea. Sometime during the early part of the 20th century, it was moved to a suburb by the sea and a new house built around these artifacts. After many years, the old part of the house was again transferred and incorporated into a new house in one of the Makati villages.

Among the items were a small carved table that was said to levitate whenever a daughter of the house came into the room and a music box that played by itself without anyone winding it. Despite my delight at ghost stories, I never saw or heard anything much to my regret, though I was told that a certain psychic saw people going up and down the stairs and sitting on the antique furniture. Eventually the house was sold and I've often wondered whether the new owner ever saw or heard anything unusual.

* * *

Comments at bambiharper@yahoo.com

A history of violence

IT WAS PAST SIX IN THE EVENING AND MY CLASS IN Criminal Procedure had just ended. My group mates and I had decided to do some late-night field work, when a male classmate walked up to us and asked if he could go. "*Merong gulo* (There's trouble)," he said simply.

Looking over his shoulder, I noticed that there were indeed several male students quietly conferring in groups. Frat men, I concluded. And then I understood that my classmate wanted to avoid getting embroiled in an impending clash between his fraternity and another Greek-letter fraternity.

YOUNG BLOOD

Dep

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.**

I am not and never have been a member of any organization which requires recruits to go through initiation rites or which has the habit of going to war with other similarly oriented organizations. I almost do not care if members of fraternities beat up one another out of a misguided sense of brotherhood. I do not want to get into trouble. But the problem is, even non-fraternity members can sometimes be caught up in the crossfire of frat wars. Students like us have often ended up victims of the culture of violence that seems to animate some fraternities.

Who was it who said that "writing saved me from the sin and inconvenience of violence"? I prefer to write rather than make a lonely protest rally around the school campus and secretly put up posters denouncing fraternity violence. I am afraid that I would be facing the fraternities by my lonesome if they got wind of my protest against their violent acts. I must say that I am only against frat men who advocate and practice violence in the name of brotherhood. I am not saying all frat members have his violent streak. My male classmate, for one, tries very hard to avoid trouble and even goes out of his way to make friends with members of other fraternities. But I believe that victims of fraternity-related violence also deserve to be heard.

I can still remember how a few years back, a poor scholar met a violent death at the hands of hired killers after he was mistaken for a member of a rival fraternity. He was just sitting on a bench, near the hangout of one fraternity, without any thought of being hit by some hired goons or frat men since he was not affiliated with any fraternity. He thought wrongly and paid dearly for it.

More recently, a grandson of a highly placed politician died after going through initiation rites mandated by one fraternity. And this year has seen a rise in fraternity-related assaults right on the UP campus and the victims included not only frat men but even some students who had no fraternities. What a waste of some of our nation's youth.

Some officers of fraternities that were involved in violent incidents have been in compliance with the Anti-Hazing Law. But while our legislators seem to have finally recognized the threats being posed by certain frat rituals, I believe the law is still inadequate. The first time I read RA 8049, I already knew it would not be effective in stopping fraternity-related violence or "physically taxing" initiation rites. In fact, the law does not prohibit physical initiation at all. It should not have been labeled as an Anti-Hazing Law since all it does is regulate the process of initiation by requiring fraternities to seek permission from school authorities prior to conducting such rites.

RA 8049 prescribes harsh penalties for participants in initiation rites when a neophyte suffers physical injuries or becomes insane, imbecile, impotent, or blind. The law imposes the penalty of *reclusion perpetua* when the hazing is marred by the death, rape, sodomy or mutilation of a neophyte. Of course, this is much better than having no law at all. But again it must be pointed out that this does not actually prevent fraternities and other organizations from making their recruits go through excruciatingly painful and emotionally draining initiation rites. The victim can only have recourse to the law after violent acts have been committed to him.

Indeed fortunate are those who get out of these initiation rites alive and become the "brods" of their tormentors. But how about those who do not survive or those who are maimed for life? What will years of imprisonment imposed on the perpetrators do to a dead or disabled recruit? Prison will not restore a recruit's life or limb.

I believe that one of the best solutions to end fraternity-related violence is for the fraternity alumni themselves to openly denounce the violent actions of their brods. Many of these alumni now occupy positions of authority and influence and their sentiments will be heard and respected by their juniors. It is time to undertake reforms within the fraternities themselves.

I have often wondered how these impressive-sounding, Greek-letter organizations became immersed in the culture of violence. It is time for the members of fraternities themselves to ask the same question and return to the practice of brotherhood in the truest sense of the word. The history of violence that has been associated with fraternities should be rewritten starting today.

Dep, 23, is a sophomore at the University of the Philippines College of Law.

THEY SAID

Third-rate colonials

"We're a second-rate country that's run by third-rate officials who act like colonials."

—Senate minority leader Aquilino Pimentel, pressing for the immediate custody of four US Marines charged with raping a Filipino woman

Favors to repay

"I would rather that the new secretary is not a politician because a politician has too many favors to give out."

—Haribon president Anabelle Plantilla on the appointment of a new environment and natural resources secretary

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NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

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Not enough reason to sacrifice our environment and fishermen

THE REPORTED TOXIC SPILLS FROM the mining operations of Lafayette Phil. Inc. in Rapu-Rapu, Albay, which is said to have contaminated the immediate waters of Albay Gulf and a portion of Pacific Ocean surrounding Rapu-Rapu, have caused a fish scare among residents of the nearby town of Prieto-Diaz, Sorsogon.

Prieto-Diaz is one of the poorest municipalities of the country. No amount of presidential visit will uplift the marginalized condition of its townfolk. It lies along Albay Gulf on the north, just across Rapu-Rapu Island where Lafayette has its mining operations. Its main source of livelihood is fishing. Most of its people depend on daily fish catch for sustenance. With the fish scare in their minds, I wonder how they are able to cope with this man-made calamity.

My research shows that Lafayette is a publicly listed Australian and German corporation. In short, Lafayette is a foreign-owned corporation. Under our Constitution, the exploitation of minerals within Philippine territory is a privilege limited to Filipinos only. In other words, only Filipinos or Filipino-owned corporations may be allowed to exploit minerals found in the bowels of the earth within our geographical territory. Hence, we cannot help but wonder how this administration allowed Lafayette to extract gold, silver, copper and zinc in Rapu-Rapu, despite the very clear prohibition under our Constitution.

We recognize the need for foreign investments. But this need should not be made a reason for allowing the degradation of our environment and depriving poor fisherfolks of their livelihood.

—SERGIO DOMASIAN,
391 Eternidad St., Brillante,
Prieto-Diaz, Sorsogon

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Why the delayed GSIS checks

ALLOW US TO CLARIFY THE POINTS RAISED by Chona M. Mantilla in her letter regarding what she called the very late delivery of GSIS (Government Service Insurance System) pensioners checks.

First, we admit that there was a slight delay in the delivery of the December pension checks. This was so because the GSIS was—and is—still in the process of validating the "records-cleansing" that we have been doing in the past couple of years. We have to do this in order to rid our database of "ghost" members that have caused severe financial drain on GSIS' pension fund. Although we have finished cleansing our database, including the records of our pensioners and retirees, we still have to double-check our final data to make sure that every peso that the GSIS releases to our beneficiaries really goes to our deserving pensioners and members.

Second, the cash gift to pensioners that Mantilla referred to as a bonus was mailed together with their January pension checks, precisely for the same reason stated above. The delivery of the December pension checks would have been further delayed had we chosen to send it with the cash gift. From hereon, with the completion of the database-cleansing, we are confident that there will be no more such delays in the future.

Mantilla likewise complained about the "discourteous behavior" of some GSIS staff in dealing with our members. We sincerely request her to please provide us the names of any GSIS employee or member discourteous with her, so that we can properly respond to her concern.

For those who do not know yet, more than a year ago, GSIS general manager Winston Garcia launched a no-nonsense campaign to make sure that all our employees will render efficient and courteous service all the time. The GSIS will never tolerate any act of discourtesy by its employees. However, we need our members and the public to help us in this campaign by providing us names and specific incidents, so we can initiate the needed investigations and punish the guilty.

—ENRIQUETA P. DISUANCO,
Government Service Insurance System,
Financial Center, Pasay City

Not in millions

THIS HAS REFERENCE TO THE NEWS STORY titled "For 14th year, Joker is Congress 'Kuripot King,'" written by Juliet L. Javellana. (PDI, 1/03/05) The story bared the amount of taxpayer money that the senators used for their foreign travels. To quote a portion of Javellana's report: "The footloose among the incumbent senators, as indicated by their foreign travel expenses, were Senators Biazon, chair of the defense committee; Miriam Defensor-Santiago, chair of the foreign relations committee, and Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., who spent P382.4 million, P388.3 million and P76 million, respectively."

We would like to respectfully correct that part of the story. Based on the records of our office and that of the Senate budget office as confirmed by its director, Senator Santiago's actual international travel expenses amounted to just P388,342. It did not reach even a million.

—DENNIS ESCALONA LEGASPI,
public relations officer, Office of Sen. Miriam
Defensor-Santiago, Room 518,
Senate of the Philippines,
Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City

Yes, it should've been P388,342, not P388.3 million. We apologize for the error. —Ed.

Give teachers their due

IT SADDENS US THAT A LOT OF OUR teachers are leaving the Philippines to work abroad. As noted in a news report, titled "Teach here first, DepEd urges migrating teachers," the Department of Education cannot prevent them from leaving. (PDI, 11/21/05) They are leaving because their present salaries are not enough to meet the needs of their families—what with the ever-rising cost of living in our country. The teachers should not be blamed for leaving the country if our government cannot provide them with better salaries and benefits.

Reading the article made us feel both sad and happy. Sad because the teachers have to leave their loved ones and put monetary value to their calling. Besides, they are turning their back on their mission to educate their fellow Filipinos.

But we also feel happy that they will earn four to five times more than they do here, and so make life better for the families they will leave behind.

We are also proud of them because foreign countries regard teaching as a very noble profession. Remember how it was several decades ago when teachers here were highly regarded by our society?

Lest we forget, the government is to blame for this brain drain. The Constitution states that the government should "give priority to education which fosters patriotism and nationalism, accelerates social progress, and promotes total human liberation and development." It emphasizes that education be given budget priority.

Teachers teach nationalism and patriotism so they are expected to "walk the talk." But at the same time, it is the responsibility of the government and private schools to give them just compensation, provide them with the needed instructional aid facilities, build enough classrooms, improve the teacher-student ratio, open up more opportunities for the teachers' professional growth, and institute other reforms for the benefit of both students and educators.

Some of us in our class desire to teach abroad but only so we will learn and acquire the latest methodology, technology and teaching strategies now in use in developed countries. Then we will return to the Philippines and impart with vigor all that we shall have learned abroad. We also want all teachers to be given the respect and honor they truly deserve as "shapers" of the hearts and minds of Filipinos.

—SELENE ARCILLA, ELLA MARIE C. BALSA,
JERIKA LOUISE B. BURGOS, JAMERNA A.
MALLI, ANGELIQUE CELINE A. OÑATE,
VICTORIA H. ROSARIO, Education Class 6,
Assumption College, Makati City

Off eggs and shells

"THE (SEA TURTLE) EGGS ARE POPULAR ASA delicacy and as choice material for eyeglass frames, lighters, combs and decorative items."

This passage, taken from an article titled "Not only for dogs, 2006 is also Year of the Turtle," (PDI, 1/03/05) is erroneous.

It is the horny, brown and yellow layer on the outer surface of the sea turtle's shell or carapace, called tortoiseshell, that is used for making eyeglass frames, combs and ornamental articles.

—ANTONIO CALIPJO GO,
199 Sauyo Road, Novaliches, Quezon City

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WEDNESDAY / APRIL 20, 2005
VOL. 1 / NO. 1
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Fancied fight
▶24
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'Ang Pangulo' burns; 4 injured

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—A 10-MINUTE FIRE gutted the presidential yacht BRP Ang Pangulo while it was undergoing repair at a pier in Bauan, Batangas on Saturday, the INQUIRER learned yesterday.

A report reaching this camp said the fire started at around 6:30 a.m. It was put out about 10 minutes later by responding firemen.

The vessel was undergoing repair at the Keppel Dry Dock in Barangay San Miguel when the fire broke out, the report said.

It said investigators have yet to determine the cause of the fire.

But a source told the INQUIRER that a short circuit in the main engine of the vessel started the fire.

The source added that the Presidential Security Group barred arson investigators from entering the yacht.

For still unknown reasons, the PSG personnel deployed in the area instructed even the local police not to divulge the incident to the media, the source said.

"The PSG said the directive came from Malacañang," the source told the INQUIRER.

Four Navy personnel were slightly injured as they helped put out the fire. The Navy said the yacht suffered "minor damages."

In a statement, the Philippine Navy said Vice Admiral Mateo Mayuga, Navy chief, has ordered an investigation.

The fire damaged the boat's air-conditioning unit, water pipes, electrical wiring, dust catcher room, skylight openings and sight glass for reserve tanks and pressure gauges.

The VIP and other rooms were spared from the fire.

The Navy said the boat could have been destroyed had not its watches acted immediately.

The watches, who were on routine inspection, noticed smoke near the access door to the main and auxiliary engine rooms, according to the initial report submitted by the Ang Pangulo commanding officer, Commander Gaudencio Collado Jr.

The watches failed to control the fire with extinguishers. They were joined by the crew and shipyard personnel in putting out the fire.

Firefighters from the Bauan Bureau of Fire Protection and the crew of other boats in the shipyard also helped put out the fire completely.

The Ang Pangulo (or AT 25) has been undergoing repairs at the Keppel Batangas Shipyard in Bauan, Batangas since November.

The repairs are expected to be finished in February.

The Philippine government bought the yacht for $3 million in 1959. It can accommodate up to 400 people.

The yacht became controversial when, in August 1998, then President Joseph Estrada announced that private donors pooled P100 million to give it a facelift.

In January 2001, President Macapagal-Arroyo said she would sell all presidential luxury assets, including the Ang Pangulo, to generate revenue, but the boat remained in government hands.

The government tried to sell it for $5.5 million, but there were no takers. *Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Dona Pazzibugan, in Manila and Jamie Alarcon, PDI Research*

Gun used in Abra mayor's slay found

By Artha Kira Paredes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BANGUED, ABRA—Three pieces of evidence believed used by one of the assassins of La Paz Mayor Marc Ysrael Bernos were recovered from a restaurant owned by his relative and political rival, police said.

Police recovered an M-16 rifle, a bonnet and a jacket on Saturday from Nanay's Kusina in Poblacion La Paz. The eatery is owned by Carmencita Bernos, the late wife of the assassinated mayor's uncle and political opponent, Domingo Bernos, according to Senior Supt. Marvin Bolabola, Criminal Intelligence Detection Group regional director.

When reached by the INQUIRER, Domingo Bernos admitted to owning the property but said he had given it to his daughter who was his wife's namesake.

He said he heard that evidence had been recovered from the property but that he had no idea how the items got there.

"Go ahead, let them investigate. I'm open to that," he said as he challenged authorities to look for all angles and not just politics.

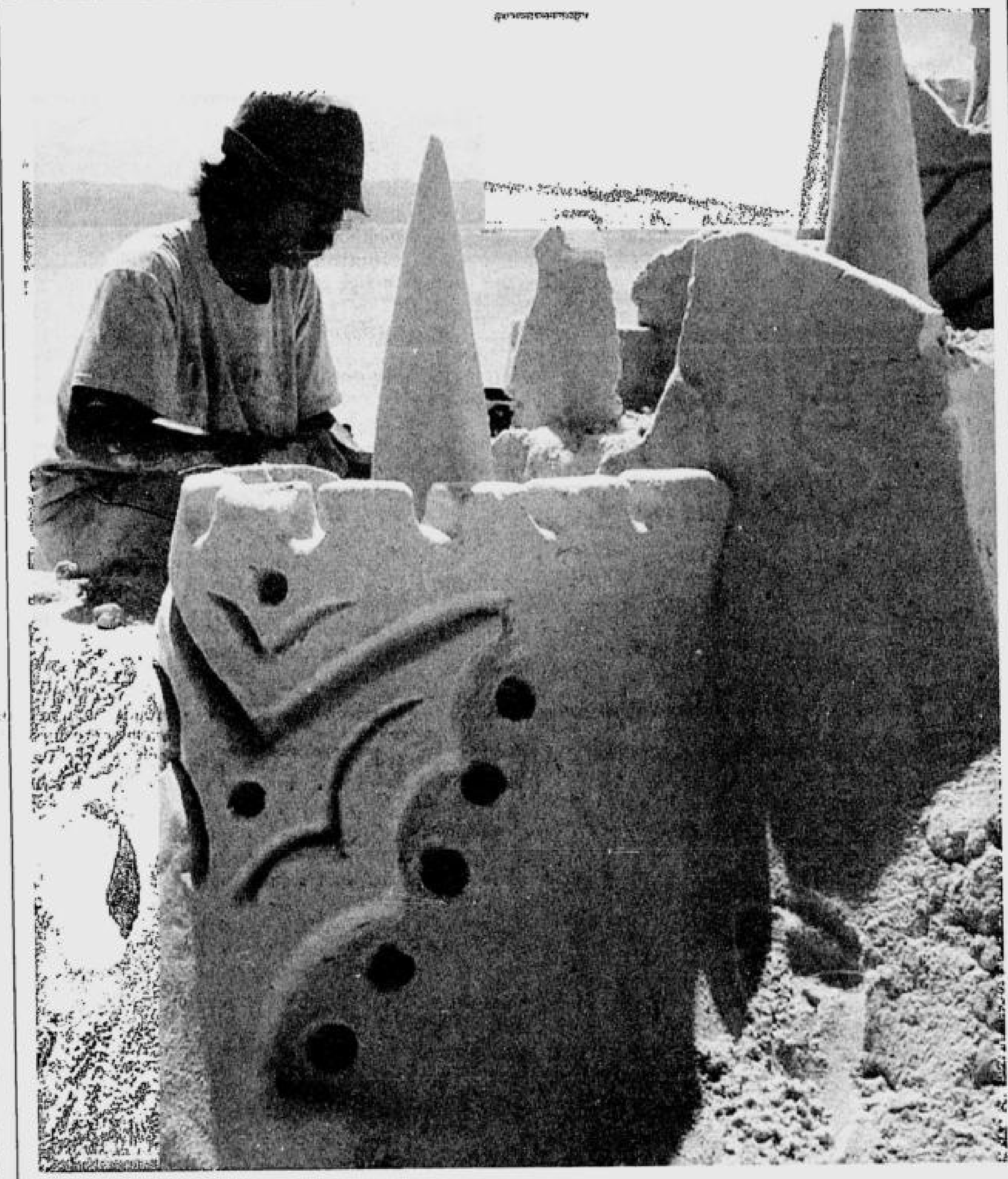
"I have never done anything violent. My town-mates know me. I will be the first person to want to know what really happened," he added.

Marc Ysrael Bernos, who, at 31, was the youngest mayor and most vocal opposition official in the province, was shot in the nape as he was watching a basketball game at the La Paz town plaza on Friday night.

His relatives believed his death was related to politics. "Our initial assessment is that the killing was purely politically motivated...," said former Gov. Andres Bernos, the mayor's father.

The elder Bernos said the murder could be a conspiracy between two people "who had an ax to grind with my son."

Chief Supt. Leonardo Dionisio, Cordillera police director, said the evidence was found through the help of an anonymous texter.



SAND PIECES ARNOLD ALMACEN/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU
An artist completes a commissioned work on a sand sculpture in Boracay, a good business on the resort island that is gaining popularity among resort owners and tourists.

Gov asks execs not to relate politics to mining

SORSOGON CITY—SORSOGON GOV. Raul R. Lee assailed efforts by some local politicians in the province to pin down Lafayette Philippines Inc. as responsible for the mercury contamination of the seawaters of Sorsogon on the Pacific side without concrete proof to that effect.

Lee, in a letter to Lafayette managing director Andrew McIlwain, said the acts of these politicians were not helping the public, especially the fishermen and instead, caused confusion among constituents.

The governor said the company "should not be dragged into the political ongoing atmosphere here in Sorsogon" and assured Lafayette officials "there is no cause for alarm (for Lafayette) to be always cited by other sources as these are purely political and of no benefit to our fisherfolk and constituency."

He, however, warned the Australian firm of the consequences should it be found that Lafayette indeed caused the mercury contamination, saying the provincial government would not hesitate to take legal actions against the company.

The provincial government had already commissioned the National Science Research Institute (NSRI) to conduct an independent water sample analysis to determine the source of mercury and other chemicals that had contaminated the sea waters.

Lee said the study would focus on mercury and other chemicals because Lafayette had already admitted to two cyanide spills last year, resulting in the imposition by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of a P10.7-million fine.

The governor said officials and nongovernment organizations should wait for the results of the study before blaming anyone.

Meanwhile, Sorsogon City Mayor Sally Lee said they are now trying to look for P500,000 in funds to finance the NSRI study. *Bobby Q. Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Search for 4 missing in fluvial parade tragedy stopped

By Jani Arnaiz and Connie E. Fernandez
PDI Visayas Bureau

SAN RICARDO, PANAON ISLAND—Less than 24 hours since the sea accident happened, rescuers yesterday stopped the search for four persons who were reported missing after their pumpboat overturned during a fluvial procession on Sunday.

SPO4 Benjamin Alterado, town police chief, said the search and rescue team called off their operations at about 9:30 a.m. when they failed to find any of the missing after searching the area where the accident happened past 10 a.m. on Sunday.

He said the team, composed of two Air Force helicopters, Southern Leyte React Team and 15 pumpboats, went as far as Camiguin province to look for Benjamin Vestal, 34 and daughter Rhea Patria, 4; Jeros Galabo, 7 and Jenny Abuelo, 9.

Alterado said the search started after ML Jun Jay capsized about 200 meters from the wharf of Barangay Inulinan at about 10 a.m. on Sunday.

The operations stopped at midnight and resumed about 4 a.m. yesterday. But five hours later, the team gave up and presumed that the four were already dead, said Alterado.

San Ricardo Mayor Virginia Mejia confirmed that the team called off the search after they could not find anyone due to the strong current.

Local officials were asked to report any sighting of the bodies of the four.

"I believe they are dead. Only God really knows if they would be found," said Mejia.

But Sofia Vestal, 33, appealed to authorities to continue the search.

Benjamin and Rhea were among the 184 passengers of a motor launch that led about 15 vessels in Sunday's fluvial procession in honor of the feast of the Sto. Niño.

But the pumpboat capsized about 200 meters from the wharf at Barangay Inulinan while it was making a turn to return to the port.

Sixteen persons, 14 of them children, were killed while 160 others survived. Four passengers were still at the district hospital in Pintuyan town, Southern Leyte, a 15-minute boat ride from San Ricardo.

According to Alterado, skipper Efren Sandiesa told police that his passengers did not listen to him when he told them to occupy both sides of the vessel after he noticed that most of them stayed at the right side of the pumpboat.

When the pumpboat made a turn to the left, the police chief said, some passengers transferred to the left side, causing it to tilt and then overturn.

Alterado said it was easy for the boat to tilt because there was nothing to pull it down, as the cargo area located at the lower portion of the pumpboat was empty.

There was also no representative from the organizer of the fluvial parade to marshal the passengers, he added.

Sandiesa did not also coordinate with the Coast Guard before sailing, said Alterado. The Coast Guard station is in Barangay Ebenit, about 2 km from Inulinan. *With a report from Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Motorcycle deaths rise

LUCENA CITY—At least 31 persons, mostly youngsters, died in motorcycle accidents last year, Quezon police reported. Statistics at the provincial police showed that 26 robberies and shootings last year were also perpetrated by motorcycle-riding suspects, most of them wearing helmets. Supt. Vilmor Manzano, Quezon police chief of investigation and intelligence, attributed the high number of accidents to the growing number of motorists who prefer to ride in motorcycles.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Rheno Peregrino Ghent; 36

AID VOLUNTEER and House of Representatives staff worker Rheno Peregrino Ghent died last Jan. 8. He was 36. He was cremated last Jan. 12 in Cebu City. Relatives and friends request prayers for the repose of his soul.

5,000 ECCs raise eyebrows

SOBRANG DALI NAMAN!

LUCENA CITY—A militant group assailed Environment Secretary Michael Defensor for approving 4,986 Environmental Clearance Certificates last year and compared the fast distribution of the vital document to free fast food coupons for foreign investors. "The ECCs were awarded to foreign investors like free fast food coupons. They can easily get the ECCs at the counter with no sweat and in red carpet fashion," Gerry Albert Corpuz, information officer of the fisherfolk alliance Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya), said in a statement.

Vice mayor's son held

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—A son of the vice mayor of Amadeo, Cavite, who was earlier reported to have been abducted by unidentified men, was actually arrested by agents of the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTF) on Tuesday, police said. Chief Supt. Jesus Verzosa, Calabarzon police director, said Marlon Bawalan, 39, son of Amadeo Vice Mayor Elpidio Bawalan, was arrested in Barangay Maitim, Amadeo at about 6:30 a.m. Tuesday. He said Marlon was not abducted but was arrested in connection with a hijacking case in Cavite last December. "It was not a kidnapping.... It was a legitimate police operation," Verzosa told the INQUIRER.

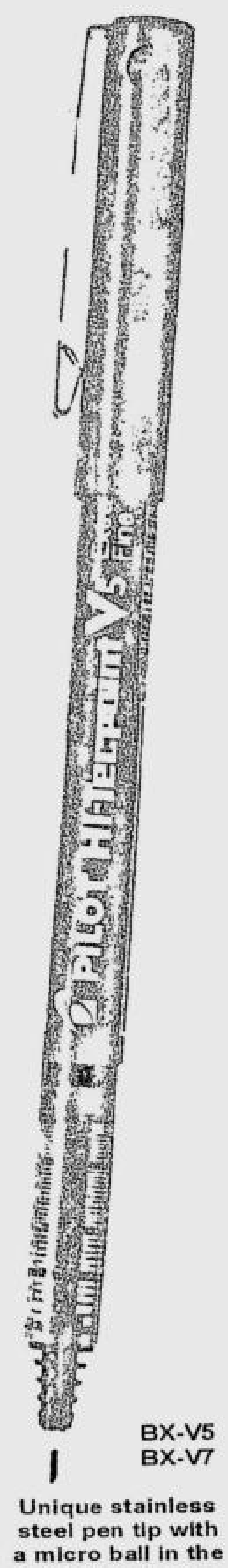
Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Solons to refile wage bill

TULOY ANG LABAN!

LUCENA CITY—Anakpawis Representatives Crispin Beltran and Rafael Mariano vowed to refile House Bill No. 345 calling for a legislated P125 across-the-board nationwide wage hike when Congress resumes session. "The struggle for the long-delayed P125 across-the-board nationwide wage hike will be entering its sixth year," Beltran, former chair of the militant Kilusang Mayo Uno, said in a statement. He said it's been six years since wages were increased.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau



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Lozano files impeach rap ahead of opposition again

From page A1

dent Macapagal-Arroyo that the House of Representatives thrashed in September last year.

At 11:16 a.m., the former lawyer of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos filed the complaint with House Secretary General Roberto Nazareno, who forthwith stamped it "Received."

Doubting the legality of Lozano's action, Nazareno did not allow the lawyer to swear that the complaint was authentic.

The Constitution bars a second impeachment complaint against the same impeachable official, in this case Ms Arroyo, within one year.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero promptly declared Lozano's move "illegal" because he used the opposition's amended complaint against Ms Arroyo without the "permission" of its original endorsers.

Lozano filed the first complaint on June 27 last year but later allowed the minority to amend it.

The amended complaint charged Ms Arroyo with culpable violation of the Constitution, betrayal of public trust, and bribery and graft and corruption.

The specific allegations included committing electoral fraud in 2004, receiving huge kickbacks from gambling lords, and approving contracts that were manifestly disadvantageous to the government.

In just over a month of deliberations, the House quashed the impeachment complaint, ruling that the amended charge was "new and separate" from the Lozano complaint, thus barring its filing.

The Lozano complaint itself suffered the same fate because, although it was declared sufficient in form, it was declared insufficient in substance.

A finding of sufficiency in form and substance is a prerequisite to allowing an impeachment complaint to be transmitted to the Senate for trial.

Rat race

At a press conference, Escudero said the minority's legal team was studying whether to file administrative and criminal charges against Lozano.

"We're saddened by his action. We don't know why he did it; it's as if he again wants this to be a rat race to be participated in by the opposition," Escudero said.

Nazareno told reporters that he was merely performing a "ministerial" duty.

"I have to inquire from the rules (of the House) if the endorsements were OK. The refiling of the complaint was OK but you have to have a new resolution of endorsement," said Nazareno.

News clippings

He noted that Lozano merely attached the list of signatures of original endorsers to the amended complaint filed by the opposition last July 25.

Nazareno observed that except for the complaint, "all resolutions of endorsement were duplicate (copies)."

The complaint also bore some attachments, including clippings of news items about the current political crisis and transcripts of the three-hour "Hello Garci" audio tapes, which purportedly showed that Ms Arroyo stole the 2004 presidential election.

Justifying the haste with which he refiled the impeachment complaint, Lozano said he tried to meet with the members of the House minority who were having a meeting at the Sulo Hotel in Quezon City yesterday morning.

Locked out

"But they locked me out of the meeting. They did not even give me the courtesy of informing me whether I was invited or not. They made me wait. I feel insulted," he told reporters.

"But in fighting for my principles, I should never involve my personal emotions, so I contained my pride, held my anger and gracefully exited," he said.

Lozano said Escudero did see him at about 9 a.m. He said he was able to explain to the lawmaker why he was filing the case ahead of the opposition.

"I'm not going to violate the one-year ban. As interpreted by the Supreme Court, the prohibition is on multiple initiation of impeachment proceedings, not on the filing," Lozano told Escudero.

Lozano said the young leader of the opposition in the House, who had waged a failed bid to impeach Ms Arroyo, was "silent."

"He did not give me the go-signal, but he also did not prevent me (from doing so)," said Lozano.

Violations of law

Escudero acknowledged seeing Lozano at Sulo Hotel.

"I told him to wait after the meeting, so that I and Congressman Zamora could talk with him. He did not wait for us. In fact, he called his own press conference and went to Congress to file it. I texted him last Thursday inviting him for a meeting Friday, which he eventually rejected," the minority leader said.

Escudero wanted to meet with Lozano "to get his side, listen to him about his plans—why, when and how?"

He reminded Lozano that the resolutions of endorsements were valid only last year. "Using the endorsers without their permission is not only a clear violation of the law but also of the ethical standards observed by lawyers," Escudero said.

Ban lifted in July

The lawmaker insisted that based on impeachment rules, "nothing can be initiated within one year," and that the "definition of initiation is filing and referral."

Escudero said the constitutional ban would be lifted in July.

As to the right of Lozano to file the complaint, the minority leader said it was "the right of anyone to file a complaint ... if that is a private complaint."

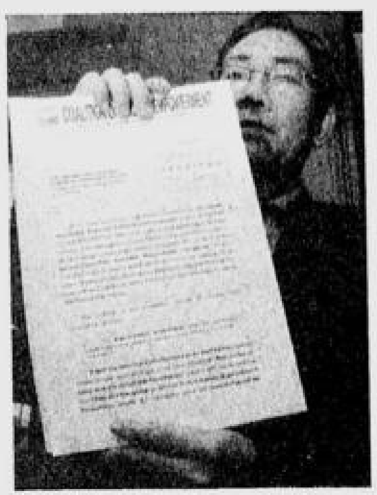
Quoting Lozano, the lawmaker said Lozano was doing it "*para sa bayan* (for the country)," although he himself was unsure what he meant.

Just the same, Escudero reiterated his call for the Arroyo administration not to "bastardize the process."

"They should wait for the true, genuine and real minority to (initiate the process) and not muddle it the way they shamelessly did last year," he said.

Escudero acknowledged that the ambiguity of the impeachment rules was the "pitfall of the system."

"That's why the minority will seek to amend the rules," he said.



LAWYER Oliver Lozano refiles his amended impeachment complaint against President Arroyo in the House of Representatives. JOAN BONDOC

Top Republican says Bush may face impeachment

From page A1

hearings into the growing controversy early next month.

But in his appearance on ABC's "This Week" program, Specter insisted the Senate was not going to give the President what he called "a blank check."

When asked what could happen if lawmakers found Bush in violation of the law, Specter answered: "Impeachment is a remedy. After impeachment, you could have a criminal prosecution, but the principal remedy . . . under our society is to pay a political price."

He made it a point to clarify, however, that he was speaking theoretically and was "not suggesting remotely that there's any basis" for a presidential impeachment at this moment.

The controversy erupted last month after The New York Times reported that Bush had repeatedly authorized the National Security Agency to monitor overseas telephone calls and e-mail traffic to and from people living in the United States without requisite permission from a court.

Under the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, the government can conduct such surveillance only for 72 hours as it seeks a warrant for continued monitoring.

Bush has blasted the disclosure as harmful to national security and vowed to continue the wiretaps, arguing he had the right to authorize them under his constitutional war powers as well as a resolution passed by Congress in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The measure adopted three days after the strikes allows the president "to use all necessary and appropriate force" against those involved in them, but contains no specific language on surveillance.

Specter said he disagreed with the contention that the resolution included an implicit authorization to modify the surveillance act.

"If that's what the administration was relying on, I thought they were wrong," he pointed out.

A knotty question

Specter added that the issue of wartime presidential powers was "a very knotty question" that "ought to be thoroughly examined."

Specter assured he was prepared to listen to the administration's explanations, but warned, "I'm going to wear my skepticism on my sleeve."

Specter became the second Republican member of the judiciary committee to publicly question the president's rationale for authorizing the wiretaps.

Sen. Sam Brownback said last month he did not agree "with the legal basis on which they are basing their surveillance."

The statements indicate the Bush administration will not be able to count on full support from the 10 Republicans in the committee when the hearings begin in early February.

The judiciary committee also has eight Democrats, who have questioned the legality of the surveillance program.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, one of the Democratic members, reiterated her doubts on Sunday, saying, "I do not believe it's true that the President's plenary power would allow him to simply avoid the law."

The fray was also joined by First Lady Laura Bush, who told reporters on the way to Liberia that the American people expected the President "to do what they can to make sure there's not an attack by foreign terrorists."

The latest CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll found that 50 percent of Americans believe the administration was right in undertaking those wiretaps, while 46 percent said it was wrong.

AFP

Bamboo band music lives on, even in PNP

From page A1

of notes. You have to wait for certain portions of a musical score before you can play. It is a bit more complicated, yet the melody is mellow and sweet to the ears."

Ramos wants to teach the police how to play instruments that Filipinos can truly call their own. To date, the PNP Band can beautifully execute Filipino songs.

In fact, the Ramos clan has been doing just that for generations.

Land of bamboos

Ramos is from Malabon town, a fusion of the words "ma" and "labong," which means a land full of bamboo shoots. It is little wonder that Malabon residents have fashioned musical instruments out of bamboo stalks and created a *bandang kawayan* (bamboo band).

Ramos' great grandfather, Felix, along with five others, was a pioneer of such a band.

From a folder, Ramos draws out a photo of the band. In it are eight men from a century ago when Filipinos were just beginning to create a nation.

Did Felix know his craft would survive his death, and pass from one generation to the next? Did the men know their sons and daughters would live in a free, democratic country?

Days of the Katipuneros

At the backdrop is a flag showing a sun with several rays.

"It's a Katipunan flag. They are Katipuneros, too," Ramos says, referring to the organization formed by revolutionary hero Andres Bonifacio to free the Philippines from Spanish colonial rule.

Felix's sons would inherit their father's love for the bamboo instruments, and so would the third and fourth generations of Ramoses.

"Among my father's siblings, it was my uncle Mario who really took to playing bamboo instruments," Ramos says. During his time, Mario was in charge of the band, managing members and taking care of the instruments.

Music till eternity

When a member of the band dies, his instrument is placed inside the coffin, for him to carry to eternity.

"My siblings can create bamboo instruments better than I can," Ramos says.

Ramos started playing bamboo instruments when he was 6, joining a bamboo band, a tradition that his nieces and nephews keep alive.

PO1 Editha Salenga and PO1 Alex Estallo play the "angklung," a native musical instrument made of bamboo, during the annual general inspection at the Camp Crame grandstand area. They are part of the 18-member PNP Bamboo Band. LYN RILLON

Besides the joy that playing music gives him, music also gave Ramos a shot at a college education. It was perhaps one of the legacies that his forebears had not foreseen.

Early days

He was a scholar at the university, becoming the UST Band's assistant conductor before his graduation in 1986. Some of Ramos' nieces and nephews are also scholars.

One of his teachers at UST was Col. Pedro Tolentino, the PNP Band's seventh conductor since its creation in 1902.

It was Tolentino who lured Ramos into the PNP.

After graduation, Ramos found himself a young officer in the Philippine Constabulary. In 1995, after stints in the bands of the Philippine Military Academy and another police training center, Ramos became the conductor of the PNP Band.

Gun in one hand

Does he not find contradiction in playing a musical instrument, one that gives joy to the soul, and in wielding a gun, one that ends life?

"Not at all," Ramos says. "We all know our role in the police, and that is to provide music. Can you imagine a PNP anniversary or a police parade or a wake without a band? I can't."

A high note in Ramos' career occurred in Singapore in 1997 when police bands in the region performed during a meeting of Southeast Asian police chiefs.

A cop's dream

"We did not know they were going to pick up the best police band. We just played, and they picked us," Ramos narrates. "During the closing ceremony, I was called to conduct all the other bands. It felt great."

For many, a successful man is one who has reached the top of his organization, whatever it is. Ramos has certainly done that.

Yet in a sense, his work is still not quite complete. Ramos says he wants to do one more thing before bowing out of the police organization—and that is to teach the band's members, now experts at playing brass instruments, to become also experts at playing bamboo instruments.

To date, half of the band's 39 members can already play bamboo instruments.

Once, they played before a group that included generals.

"They were so amazed, and couldn't quite get over it. You know musicians, the best compliment we get is a clap and a cheer," Ramos says.

He dreams of the day when all elementary schools will have bands that play not only lyres and drums but also bamboo instruments.

That, he says, will be the day.

RP future bleak . . .

From page A1

he told a group of reporters, businessmen and members of the diplomatic corps in Makati City yesterday.

Bear Stearns is the same investment bank that cheered on President Macapagal-Arroyo's drive to reform the fiscal sector last year, mainly through the enactment of an expanded value-added tax law.

Stuermer acknowledged that he was responsible for making the controversial prediction in July 2005 that Ms Arroyo would survive the impeachment complaint filed against her in Congress—at least until January 2006.

"It's now January 2006," he said.

Tougher politically

Stuermer is giving the President a 50- to 60-percent chance of remaining in office under the present system of government.

"GMA is tougher politically than the opposition expected," he said. "The longer impeachment and Cha-cha go on, the more GMA's political support will recover."

Stuermer also said there was a 25- to 30-percent chance that the country would shift to a parliamentary form of government. He noted that there was little public support for the move which, he said, was "mainly a creation of Manila's elite."

Finally, the Bear Stearns analyst said there was only a 15- to 20-percent chance that Ms Arroyo would be impeached by the House of Representatives and convicted by the Senate.

"GMA's allies control the lower house and will undermine the impeachment process with procedural obstructionism," he said.

The impeachment complaint against Ms Arroyo was trashed by the House in September last year, but the opposition has vowed to file another impeachment case against her this year.

Stuermer's bearish economic assessment came even as he acknowledged the peso was one of the best-performing currencies in the region.

He also took note of the resurgent stock market, the respectable pace of economic growth and the "marginal" slowdown in the acceleration of consumer prices.

"The short term view is positive," he said. "Everything is coming up roses."

No impact on the poor

But he said he was "not that optimistic" in general terms. "Yes, we'll have a 5- to 6-percent [economic] growth each year. Everything is improving, but it has no impact on the standard of living for Filipinos."

Stuermer's candid assessment echoes the earlier sentiment aired by Sen. Manuel "Mar" Roxas II, who pointed out that the benefits of a strengthening peso against the US dollar—a key bragging point for Ms Arroyo and her publicists—had failed to filter down to the majority of impoverished Filipinos.

Stuermer described the local economy as "very resilient," noting that the last time the gross domestic product contracted was in the wake of the East Asian financial crisis in 1997.

Even then, he said the contraction was due to El Niño, which cut agricultural output. "It is very hard to make the Philippine economy collapse on any given year."

Undoing

The Bear Stearns analyst believed, however, that this resilience would be the country's undoing.

"The downside is this: There is now a downside for bad political behavior," he said. "The Philippines' political class has no incentive for good political behavior."

Because the bulk of economic growth still depends on agricultural output, which is largely immune from politics, political squabbles can only depress growth by so much.

Benjamin Diokno, a professor at the University of the Philippines School of Economics, underscored this point in a presentation.

He showed that the local economy had historically grown by an average of 4 percent, despite various boom and bust cycles, mainly because of built-in safeguards like the country's dependence on agriculture.

Little incentive for reforms

This scheme means there is "little incentive for meaningful structural reform that will attract real investments," Diokno said.

He said the last round of genuine structural reforms in the Philippines came in 1986 with the toppling of the Marcos dictatorship.

"Now, the only 'out' is to send your mother abroad to work as a maid," he said. "This is having negative social implications."

Diokno, who served as budget secretary in the Estrada administration, predicted that the local economy would grow by only 4.6 percent this year—significantly lower than the government's official growth target of 6.3 percent to 7.4 percent.

He said the economy continued to be threatened by the possibility of high interest rates, a potential surge in international crude oil prices to $70 per barrel, a decline in income from electronics exports, and political instability.

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Russian diplomat found dead in Makati condo

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A JUNIOR RUSSIAN DIPLOMAT WAS FOUND dead and floating in a swimming pool at a condominium in Makati City on Sunday night. The police said the case was the first reported death of a foreigner in the city this year.

The Russian was identified as Gurgen Albertovich Balayan, 22, a protocol officer and a resident of the Makati Tuscany Condominium at the corner of Fonda Street and Ayala Avenue.

His body was found by another foreigner who lived in the same building.

An investigation conducted by the Makati Police Department's Homicide Section showed that Balayan's body was first discovered by a Korean, Moon Hag Kim.

Just 'relaxing'

Moon told the police that he saw Balayan at a few minutes past 7 p.m. as he passed by the swimming pool. He said the Russian was floating face down but added that he did not think much of it as he thought Balayan was just relaxing.

Moon, however, said he decided to call the building's security officers when he returned and saw the Russian still in the same position at around 7:30 p.m.

The swimming pool was about four to five feet deep, security guard Rene Villanueva told the police.

Dead on arrival

SPO1 Lewelie Cristobal, case investigator, said in his report that the security officers tried to revive Balayan but decided to rush him to the Makati Medical Center when their efforts proved futile.

Balayan was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. Officials from the Russian Embassy were present but declined to comment. Balayan was brought to the Veronica Funeral Parlor in Pasay City for autopsy.

Police said they were investigating whether his death was accidental or due to foul play.

Suspect in twin slay to remain in Crame

By DJ Yap

THE POLICE CAPTAIN WHO ALLEGEDLY SHOT dead basketball referee Froilan Jimeno and his brother, Arnold, on Christmas Day will not be moving to the Quezon City Jail anytime soon.

Senior Insp. Michael Sanchez was allowed yesterday to stay at the Camp Crame custodial center, after he told a Quezon City court that his life might be in danger due to 21 Tadtad Gang members detained at the jail, whom he helped neutralize.

His arraignment also did not push through after the court granted his motion for a preliminary investigation to determine whether the charge against him ought to be murder or homicide.

At yesterday's hearing before Judge Hilario Laqui of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 218, Sanchez submitted a motion seeking his continued stay at Camp Crame, instead of being transferred to the city jail as was customary for murder suspects.

The policeman, a member of the city police's mobile patrol unit, said his life might be at risk because of the Tadtad Gang members detained at the city jail.

He explained that 12 days before the Christmas Day incident, he was part of the police team that caught several alleged Tadtad Gang members engaged in land-grabbing.

The Jimenos' lawyer, Romeo Erenio, said he opposed the motion on the ground that there was no sufficient basis for the alleged threat to Sanchez's life.

He added that the motion was, in effect, an insult to the capability of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology to secure its inmates. Laqui, however, granted the motion.

The judge also granted Sanchez's motion for a preliminary investigation, after the policeman questioned the city prosecutor's amendment of the charges from homicide to murder.

Sanchez said the affidavit of an eyewitness was disputable, since it was given after the inquest proceedings.

But Erenio said this was only proper, since, under the rules, affidavits could still be included as long as the inquest sheet had not yet been signed.

Sanchez is the primary suspect in the killing of the Jimeno brothers on Dec. 25 over a minor traffic altercation in Novaliches.

The Jimenos were riding on scooters along General Luis corner Damong Maliit Streets when they collided with a Toyota Revo at 10:55 a.m., where Sanchez and his relatives were on board.

After a heated argument over who was at fault, Sanchez allegedly took out his M-16 rifle and shot the brothers repeatedly.

Another brother, Ferdinand, died of a heart attack on the same day upon learning that Froilan and Arnold had died.

Meanwhile, the Jimeno family apologized to PO3 Florencio Escobido of the Quezon City Police District criminal investigation division for falsely charging that he was sympathetic to Sanchez and rude to the victims' family.

They said there was just miscommunication among the Jimenos when one of them told an INQUIRER columnist that Escobido had demanded that they buy him food, among other demands.

It was even the policeman who bought food for the family, the Jimenos said.

Pasay animators to debut on HK TV

By Jocelyn R. Uy

PASAY CITY'S ANIMATORS are going international.

Eleven residents who recently completed a rigid three-month training program on professional animation are now busy working on their first project—"Jobert," a cartoon series which will debut on Hong Kong television by the middle of the year, Pasay City Cooperative Office Head Rolando Londonio told the INQUIRER yesterday.

The 11 were the first batch of graduates from the animation training program initiated by the city government last year to turn aspiring artists into world-class animators.

Of the 20 Pasay residents who qualified for entry into the program, only 11 hurdled the rigid training conducted by Top Peg Animation and Creative Studio, an independent local animation firm, Londonio said.

Top Peg immediately hired the 11 animators to contribute to the cartoon series that would soon air in Hong Kong, he added.

"Their names will be included in the credits," said Grace Dimaranan, Top Peg managing editor.

"The cartoon series will be like 'Tutubi Patrol,' but will be most likely relevant to Overseas Filipino Workers," Londonio said.

Top Peg's "Tutubi Patrol" was an animation series for children that dealt with Filipino values.

Mayor Wenceslao "Peewee" Trinidad, meanwhile, said the city's dream of producing world-class animators was becoming a reality.

A second batch of animators has already begun training under Top Peg which will teach them the Western and Japanese styles of animation.

METROBRIEFS

MMDA fights back

METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Traffic Operations Center Executive Director Angelito Vergel de Dios said yesterday they were readying charges of illegal arrest against Makati police intelligence officers who apprehended MMDA traffic enforcer Eddie Cruz, 42. Cruz was the first to be arrested after Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay ordered local authorities to detain any MMDA traffic enforcer caught apprehending motorists in his area. Cruz had flagged down a motorist at the corner of Ayala Avenue and Edsa for beating a red light last Sunday.

Tarra V. Quismundo

Ban on pay toilets

PAY-PER-FEE ? WALA NA BANG LIBRE NGAYON !

ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

A QUEZON City councilor has filed an ordinance which bans shopping malls, hotels and restaurants in the city from charging patrons for the use of their toilets or restrooms. Owners of malls, hotels and restaurants "offer all kinds of services to their patrons, and access to clean and safe comfort rooms for free should be one of them," Councilor Edcel Lagman Jr. said. According to the proposed measure, any establishment that charges a fee for the use of comfort rooms shall not be granted business permits, or have their license revoked. Violators shall also be fined P5,000.

DJ Yap

Vizconde Massacre revisited

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

FORMER MANILA CITY PROSECUTOR JOSE B. Flaminiano has cited some vital testimony during the Vizconde Massacre trial that the trial judge, Amelita Tolentino, ignored.

Tolentino, now a Court of Appeals justice, convicted all the accused in the crime billed by the media as the "trial of the century."

Flaminiano is asking the Court of Appeals which affirmed Tolentino's verdict to reconsider its decision. Flaminiano is counsel for Hospicio "Pyke" Fernandez.

The most prominent accused in the Vizconde Massacre is Hubert Webb, son of former Sen. Freddie Webb.

"Joe Flame," as he is known in the legal circle, seeks to burn the testimony of principal prosecution witness Jessica Alfaro in a 14-page motion for reconsideration.

Flaminiano cited the testimony of Artemio Sacaguing, then head of the National Bureau of Investigation's Anti-kidnapping, Hijacking and Armed Robbery Task Force.

Alfaro was Sacaguing's asset or informer.

Sacaguing testified in Tolentino's court that Alfaro told him she knew "somebody" who related to her the details of the massacre of the members of the Vizconde family.

Showing interest in Alfaro's revelation, Sacaguing asked her to produce the supposed "witness."

Unable to produce the witness because, she said, the man "does not like to testify," Alfaro, according to Sacaguing's testimony, said: "Easy *lang*, Sir. Sir, relax *lang*, sir, *papapelan ko, papapelan ko na lang yan* (I'll play the role of the witness)."

Sacaguing then told Alfaro: "*Hindi puwede 'yan, kasi hindi ka naman* eyewitness (Your testimony won't be accepted because you were not an eyewitness)."

Sacaguing said Alfaro became silent and left his office after she was rebuffed.

Flaminiano also cited a sworn statement of a certain Roberto Barroso, a member of a burglary gang who confessed to having barged into the Vizconde house.

(Barroso and his gangmates were charged with robbery with homicide and rape before the Makati Regional Trial Court for the Vizconde Massacre. They were acquitted by the court which said that their confessions were illegally taken by the police).

Barroso said they entered the Vizconde house through the garage, and broke the glass door.

* * *

Anyway, whoever wrote me that letter threatening my life for "defending the rapists and killers," should queue up because he's not the only one who wants to do that.

I've received a lot of hate mails and calls for taking up the cudgels for Hubert Webb et al.

Anyway, I would hate to disappoint him should he make good his threat. *Subukan lang niya*.

* * *

Even after this column exposed the smuggling activities of siblings Vicky and Tomas Toh last Saturday, they have not been affected.

Yesterday, my sources at the Bureau of Customs said the Tohs smuggled out of the customs zone 30 container vans filled with resins, a highly taxable item.

They paid only the P240 processing fee for each container van.

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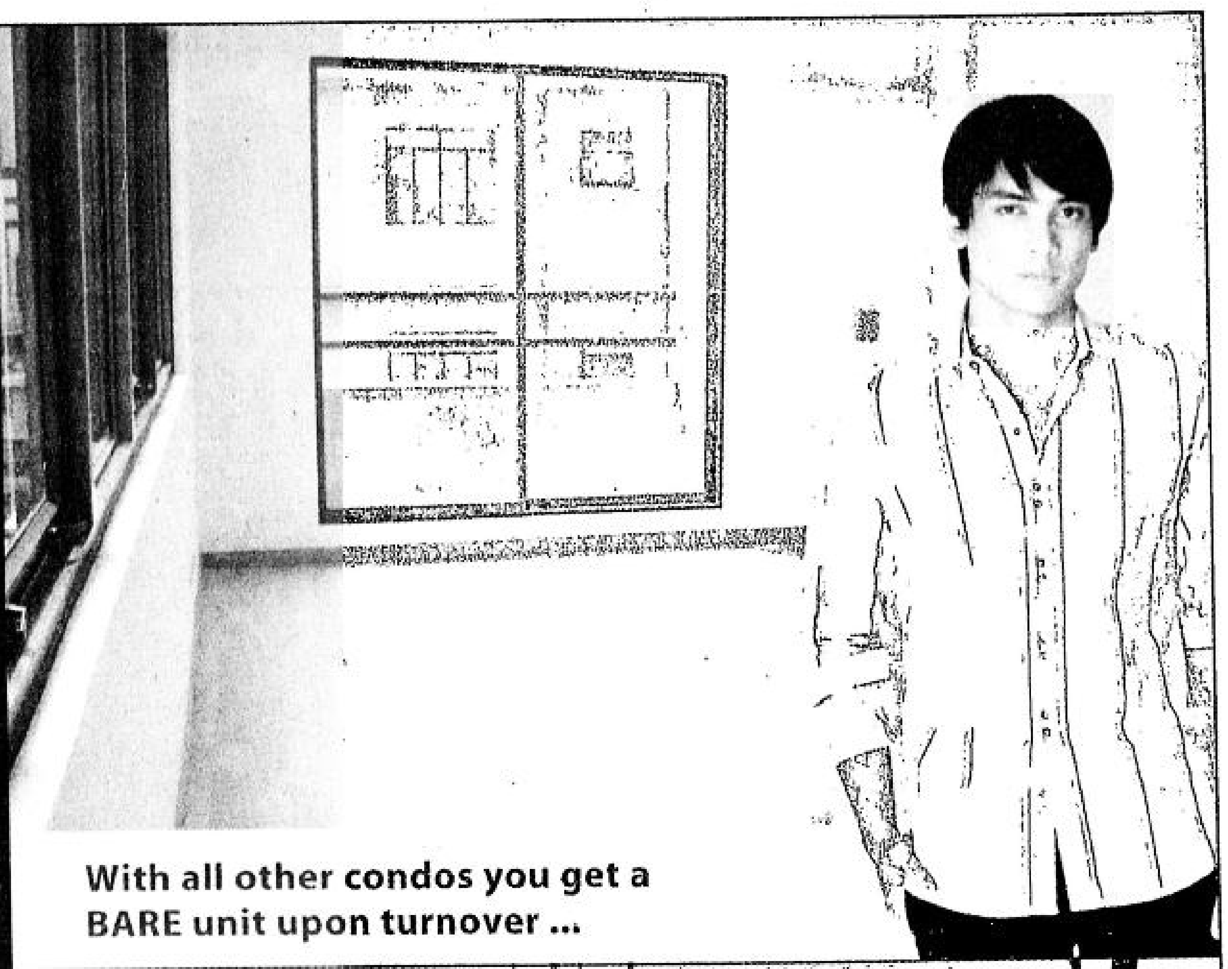

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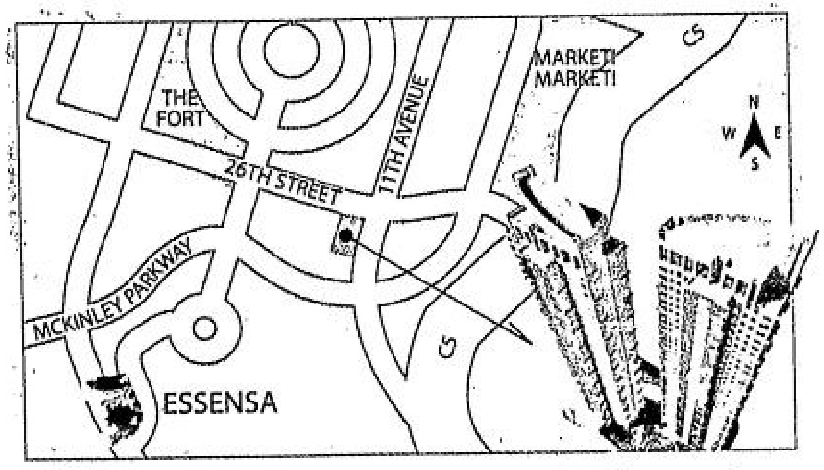
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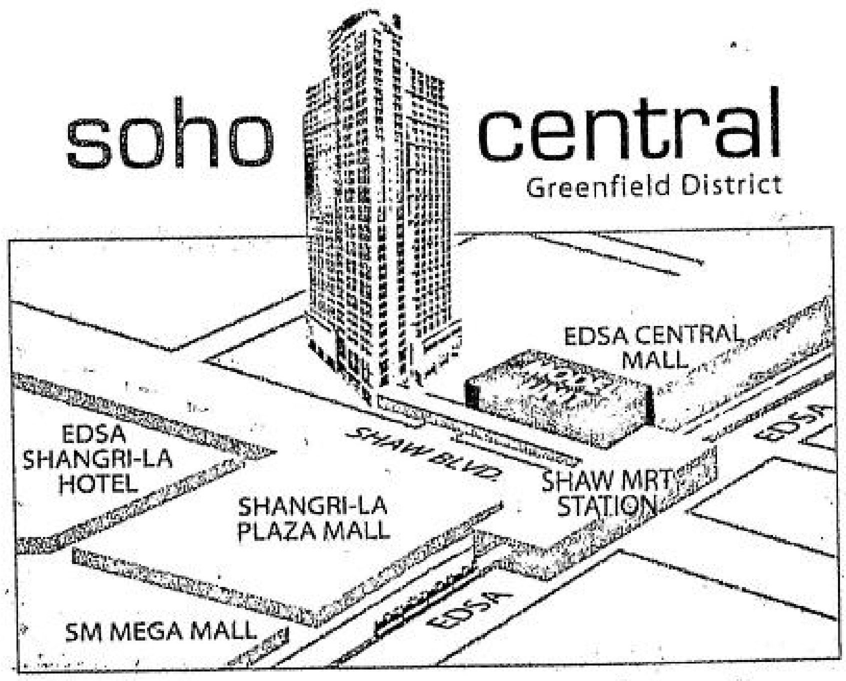
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■ Raptors break Knicks' streak /A19

Lost lullaby in LA

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES—The thick air inside the Wild Card gym seemed to groan as Manny Pacquiao ripped through it with sharp, flashing punches, again and again, his eyes sparkling wild like those of a cornered tiger.

"That's power from GenSan, tuna capital of the Philippines," blurted the bearded Pacquiao from middle ring, before moving to the corner for a sip of water.

He smiled a naughty, knowing smile then resumed punishing the air.

No need anymore to announce how strong and good Pacquiao had felt.

Aglow in sweat, the rock-hard abdominal muscles would say it all.

Pacquiao could indeed be in the fiercest, finest form of his fighting career.

* * *

But, then, is this actually the finest season to be here? It's thick-jacket weather here, and don't forget the hood, please.

The bag ladies, grimy winos, beatniks and assorted vagrants shrink and recoil in the gray chill along Vine St. in Hollywood.

A swig of cheap gin, a borrowed cigarette, or any warm, old thing would help. Even homeless, loveless souls have to log some sleep.

At the corner of La Mirada, they have slashed and pulled down the sentimental black-and-white James Dean mural outside the car shop from where the legendary movieland rebel bought and drove his red Porsche to death on the highway in 1955.

The column of the great Jim Murray, may he rest in peace, has ceased appearing in the Los Angeles Times.

Arriving at the Tom Bradley Airport, the visitor, cold, is re-assured by the warm scent of brewing coffee and cinnamon rolls toasting in the oven.

But, looking closer again, the visitor groped for the LA he had always returned to and learned to adore.

Sorry now, but an unredeemable treasure—a childhood lullaby, a mother's warm, loving smile—has been lost forever in the wintry cold.

* * *

OK, Pacquiao may indeed be one of the finest things ever to return to LA.

But is this the right time and the right place for him to be here?

The price, the fight purse to be exact, may be right. He's being paid $2 million to fight Mexican Erik Morales again.

But on Friday night, at the veranda of his second-floor flat off Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard, Pacquiao was musing on how to please his countless friends and admirers.

First, he has already set aside $40,000 for tickets to be distributed to those who had placed early requests.

Add to that the list of those whom he had to provide plane tickets for, from Manila to here and back. The request lists continue to grow, day after day, as The Battle nears.

Pacquiao swore he wanted to put all these problems and other assorted hassles behind him, if just for the moment.

* * *

Problems, problems.

But nothing compares to the impending tempest which he encounters in Las Vegas, some six hours by car from here, next Saturday (Sunday morning in Manila).

Pacquiao has indeed trained hardest for this battle of battles.

But how does he offset the built-in technical superiority of Morales, who had tamed and conquered him the way a matador would a raging bull, in their first clash last March?

He should have enough rest, advises martial arts master Shakespeare Chan.

How? "Ask him to look up to the sky, as far as he can see, don't think about the fight."

Friday, there was a bright big moon up there as Pacquiao mused on the veranda.

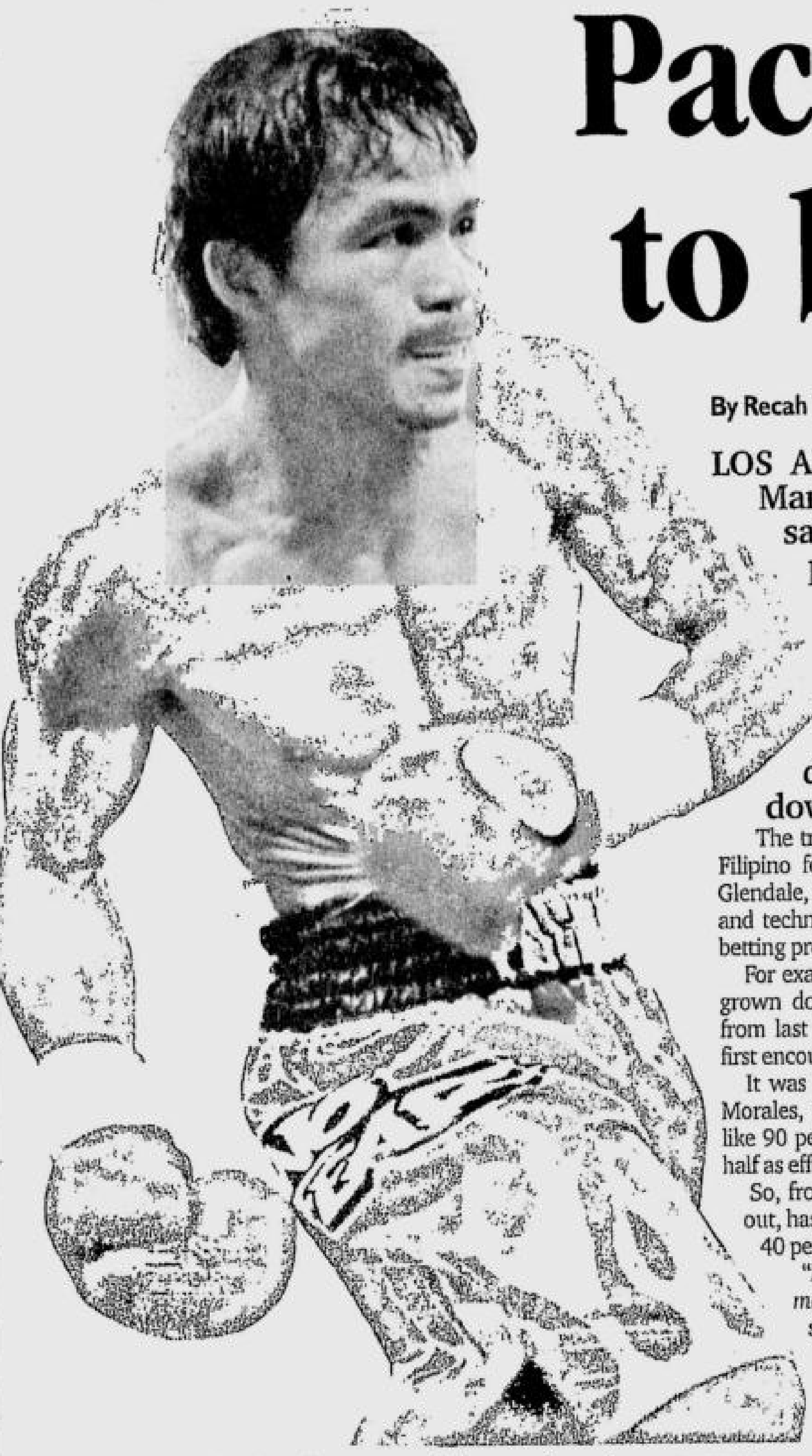
Fine. But Saturday night, there were thick clouds hovering. No moon, and not a single star up there, either.

Tell him some jokes, make him relax, send him to sleep, Chan repeats.

Sorry, it's goodbye forever to the world's most loving mother, who sang the sweetest lullaby here.

* * *

(This column was originally written for yesterday's issue of the INQUIRER.*)*



MANNY Pacquiao loads up in power, technique and speed. EDWIN BACASMAS

Pacquiao happy to be underdog

By Recah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA—Manny Pacquiao yesterday said that, instead of being pressured and bothered, he has actually been buoyed up by the betting trend in Las Vegas where he was pegged a 10-8 underdog Saturday in the sportsbook windows.

The truth, he confided to the INQUIRER after a Filipino food lunch at the Max's Restaurant in Glendale, is that he has loaded up in power, speed and technique, a fact that cannot be reflected in betting preferences.

For example, Pacquiao said, his right hand has grown doubly strong and effective, a big jump from last year when this was hardly used in his first encounter with Erik Morales.

It was like this: In the first encounter against Morales, Pacquiao's vaunted left was something like 90 percent, with the right proving to be only half as effective.

So, from 50 percent against Morales last time out, has the right fist improved by another 30 or 40 percent?

"*Di ko masabi* (Hard to say), but sure *ako, mas malakas ngayon ang kanan ko* (but I'm sure my right is now stronger)," Pacquiao confided after acknowledging a horde of autograph hunters, who also requested for photographs with their boxing idol in the restaurant.

Pacquiao headed straight to Max's, one of his favorite eating places here, where he tendered a feast of beef *nilaga, kare-kare, daing na bangus, bistik Tagalog* for team members and their friends, straight from Sunday morning Mass at the Christ the King church on North Rossmore.

Earlier, trainer Freddie Roach confirmed that he has injected changes into Pacquiao's arsenal, which had proved inferior against the crafty and vastly experienced Morales during their first encounter at the MGM Grand last March.

"Manny's in great shape, he's more focused, he has power in both hands," Roach said.

He said they have studied the defects in the last fight, and have worked hard to correct these.

"Mentally, he's more prepared this time around," Roach added.

But what should add up to the quiet optimism in the RP group here is the fact that Pacquiao is a tested, great underdog fighter.

He scored his biggest win as an awful underdog when he stopped reigning WBC super featherweight king Marco Antonio Barrera in 2003.

He jolted, stopped and dethroned world super bantamweight champion Lehlo Ledwaba of Africa coming in as a last-minute substitute in 2001.

Pacquiao came in from the cold to stop Chatchai Sasakul of Thailand to annex the WBC flyweight title in December 1998.

But against Morales last year, when he entered the ring an overwhelming favorite, Pacquiao proved unworthy of the lofty billing as he lost the first battle.

"*Ito iyon*, this is actually what we've been waiting for, *maging dehado* (to be the underdog," explained Buboy Fernandez, Pacquiao's Filipino handler.

Pacquiao was a 7-5 favorite until last Friday.

Needless to say, records would show that Pacquiao is fiercer and more dangerous fighting as an underdog.

Filipino hero smells win in late rounds

By Recah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA—MANNY PACQUIAO, who confided he did not have to avoid his favorite dishes in the runup to the official weigh-in, yesterday said he has a hunch he would be able to take out Erik Morales in the latter rounds.

That's considering that Morales will have to practically lead the life of a hunger striker in order to make the 130-lb limit for their second encounter on Jan. 21.

"If Morales comes in over by one pound, he pays me $250,000, but the fight goes on," Pacquiao told his guests at the Max's Restaurant here, thereby confirming an earlier ruling by the Nevada State Boxing Commission.

It's a $250,000 penalty in his favor for every excess pound registered by Morales, Pacquiao said.

It's widely known that the taller Morales, a three-time world champion, had had to agonize and come in like a tubercular penitent in the weigh-in for his previous encounter with Pacquiao last year.

That simply means Morales has to again deprive himself of proper nutrients as the next fight day nears, Pacquiao surmised.

Pacquiao, 27, said that with Morales now older, it would be doubly harder for the 29-year-old Mexican ring craftsman to trim down to 130 lbs.

Claiming he's at his best form, Pacquiao said he plans to sustain pressure with the hope of tiring down Morales in the second half of the 12-round bout.

"I feel he would run out of wind starting the seventh or eighth round," Pacquiao said in Filipino over lunch yesterday.

Pacquiao said one does not have to be a physician in order to understand the cruel chemistry that rumbles in the intestines of a hard worker who doesn't get the right nutrients to sustain his strength.

Ex-Pistons forward replaces Cantrell

Guiao: Torion sacking nothing serious

By June Navarro

TALK 'N TEXT HAS BROUGHT IN Darvin Ham, a member of the 2004 NBA champions Detroit Pistons, as replacement for Damien Cantrell.

Ham who also played for the Milwaukee Bucks, Atlanta Hawks and the Washington Wizards, will be measured today at the PBA offices.

The Phone Pals are currently tied with the Air21 Express after two games of their quarterfinal series in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference.

The Express drew inspiration from Gary David who was voted Player of the Week by the PBA Press Corps.

David averaged 18.75 points as he turned from reliever to starter for the Express, who had earlier ousted San Miguel Beer in a best-of-three wild-card series.

The former Lyceum University star also scored 25 points twice in that "killer stretch," including a 19-point job in the fourth quarter of their Game 1 quarterfinal match which the Phone Pals won.

Meanwhile, Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao dismissed as "nothing serious" his sacking of Jimwell Torion early in Game 2 of the Barako quarterfinal duel with the Alaska Aces also Sunday.

"It was nothing serious," said Guiao, who sent his prized playmaker home after the first quarter.

Guiao got piqued by Torion's nonchalant reaction after berating him for committing turnovers in the first quarter.

"I guess his (Torion) reaction somehow peeved me and I told him that this is not the game that he would be participating in anymore," said Guiao.

"He's (Torion) not the type of player who will disrespect or run in conflict with his coach," said Guiao.

TORION: Not the type ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

SEA Games Cebu chief sacked over unpaid bills

By Musong R. Castillo

JONATHAN GUARDO, CHAIR OF THE CEBU Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee (Cebusoc), was recently fired as chair of the city's sports commission over unpaid bills incurred during the last Southeast Asian Games.

But Guardo blamed Cebusoc's counterpart, the Philippine SEAG Organizing Committee (Philsoc), for his dismissal from the agency that is the counterpart of the Philippine Sports Commission in Manila.

"I was fired even though the root of the problem was Philsoc," Guardo said in a telephone interview. "There's no one but himself (Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, Philsoc president) to blame."

The Cebusoc, which was supposed to get a subsidy of P19.8 million from the PSC and Philsoc for hosting seven events, owes various entities close to P2 million for accommodations as well as food and beverage expenses during the last SEAG.

Guardo had issued post-dated checks after the Games and waited in vain for the Philsoc to fund those checks.

The Cebusoc is awaiting the release of about P1.8 million more from the Philsoc.

"We're worried, they might not be able to remit the (P1.8 million)," Guardo said.

La Salle eyes Samsung golf sweep

POWERHOUSE LA SALLE GUNS FOR a repeat of its historic sweep the last time up in the sixth Samsung Interscholastic golf championship on Jan. 22-24 at the Tagaytay Highlands and Midlands Golf Club courses.

The Greenies, who swept all four divisions in the fifth edition of the meet at Valley last October, will again be represented by a combined contingent with La Salle branches in Green Hills and Zobel bannering their campaign in the grade school and high school divisions and Taft competing in college play.

Ateneo will try to play the spoiler's role against their arch rivals.

There are 29 schools represented in the 54-hole tourney backed chiefly by Samsung Electronics Phils., Inc. and co-sponsored by Tokyo Tokyo, KZG, Sunbolt, Rudy Project, C-Lium Fiber, Pacsports and Sports Plus. Media partners are Wave 89.1, Jam 88.3, 89.9, 99.5 RT, 103.5 K-Lite and Killer Bee.

Defending the team crowns are LSGH for the overall plum, La Salle Taft for the boys' college and mixed high school and girls' titles and LSGH for the boys' elementary. Reedley guns for a repeat in the girls' elementary division.

Harbour five, Hapee clash for No. 4 slot

SO WHICH TEAM has the best offensive trio?

Each boasting triple threats, Harbour Centre and Hapee-PCU dispute the remaining quarterfinal bonus in the PBL Heroes Cup today at the San Andres Gym.

The winner of the 3:30 p.m. match claims the fourth spot and the remaining twice-to-beat edge in the quarterfinal round.

With the addition of top amateur point guard LA Tenorio midway in the conference, plus the consistent plays of Joseph Yeo and Fil-Am center Rob Reyes, Harbour Centre racked up four straight wins to forge the do-or-die encounter.

But Hapee-PCU has its own offensive trio in all-around performer Gabby Espinas and the streak-shooting pair of Jason Castro and Robert Sanz.

Harbour Centre, Hapee-PCU and Granny Goose wound up tied with 6-5 win-loss records at the end of the elimination round last Sunday. But the Tortillos claimed the third spot and the first twice-to-beat edge due to a superior quotient.

Granny Goose will battle sixth-placer Montaña Jewels in the other quarterfinal pairing.

Rain or Shine and Magnolia Ice Cream already advanced to the semifinals after dominating the eight-team conference.

The Elasto Painters posted the best record at 8-3, while the Wizards slipped to second place at 7-4 after a surprising three-game skid.

It is a virtual best-of-three series between the Portmasters and the Teethmasters as they will also clash in the other quarterfinal matchup. *Jasmine W. Payo*

STANDINGS	W	L
R. or Shine	8	3
Magnolia	7	4
G. Goose	6	5
Hapee-PCU	6	5
Harbour	6	5
Montaña	5	6
Far E. Ins.	3	8
Toyota Otis	3	8

GAME TODAY (*San Andres Gym*)

3:30 p.m.—Harbour Centre vs Hapee-PCU

LA TENORIO: Timely addition

Zamar finds new job as Indon coach

BOYSIE ZAMAR, THE COACH OF the national team formed by the Basketball Association of the Philippines, yesterday left for Indonesia to resume a career that has been mothballed because of the country's suspension by the international basketball federation (Fiba).

With the help of BAP, Zamar was able to secure a 12-month contract with the Panasia Garuda team in the Indonesian Basketball League worth $2,000 a month.

"I need this for a change," Zamar, who coached the last SEAG-winning RP squad in 2003 in Vietnam, told the INQUIRER in a text message before boarding his 2 p.m. flight yesterday.

"I will resume my coaching career there and will be back again soon," he added in Filipino.

"He's got mouths to feed. Nothing is happening with his career here," Ed Ponceja, Zamar's agent, told reporters.

Musong R. Castillo

Applause for Air21

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

WHATEVER HAPPENS NOW TO Air21, I couldn't care less. The fact that it has reached the quarterfinals of the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference is more than enough reason to jubilate for the Express.

Look, Air21 has leveled its best-of-five quarterfinal series with Talk 'N Text at 1-1, and if that's not big for you, I don't know what is. For Air21 to have gone this far, why cheers to that.

I imagine Bert Lina and Lito Alvarez, Air21's 1-2 management punch, to be exchanging high-fives no end when the Express bundled out defending champion San Miguel Beer in the wild card phase of the eliminations.

If they had been over-generous and given their boys more than a pat on the back following the Express' series-equaling victory over the Phone Pals on Sunday, I wouldn't be surprised.

Hey, isn't it only a while back that Air21 was the object of ridicule, short of being the butt of all jokes, because of a management policy to have the Air21 coach field in all of the team's 12 players during every game?

That policy has cost innumerable woes for the team, not to mention coaching careers falling by the wayside.

The distinguished Joe Lipa left the team not exactly a happy man as Air21 struggled continually under his tutelage.

Bong Ramos likewise would soon pack his bags and move to Talk 'N Text—not even his years of coaching in Indonesia helping Air21 any during his brief stint as the Express coach.

So odd indeed, if not eerie, is the must-use-all 12 players dictum that Air 21 management would soon find replacements for Lipa and Ramos hard to come by as even coaches really in need of a job shunned offers to handle the team.

It seemed like a kiss of death once you became the Air21 coach.

Only Bo Perasol, perhaps driven by youthful idealism, emerged in the end as the only taker, bucking catcalls coming his way when he finally accepted the coaching job after a thorough soul-searching. When he finally accepted it, the GenSan City-born Perasol was quoted as saying, "I'll give it a try."

Last time I talked to him at the Ynares Center in Antipolo City, Bo Perasol, then very new at his post, said, "I have a formula for this team to make the policy click."

I never bothered to ask about his formula, but whatever that is, I guess it's doing him wonders now, and every jobless coach might now wish the formula had been his.

In tomorrow's Game 3 to break the 1-1 deadlock, I will watch with bated breath how Air21 will try to score a second straight victory. Of course, it won't be easy sailing as usual for Air21, knowing fully well how tough Talk 'N Text can be. But whatever the outcome, I'd be clapping this early already.

As I said, Air21 getting this far is enough reason for me to express my admiration for the Express.

* * *

FASTBREAK. Ceferino "Pino" Tengasantos, my childhood mentor whom everybody now calls "That Man From Hawaii," is in town together with his wife, Atchie Ancing. The couple will join the Grand Reunion of Batch '56 of the Mangatarem High School on Jan. 21 at the Mangatarem (Pangasinan) Auditorium. Dr. Eddie Olegario and his wife, Manang Amy, had gone to my brother's house in Toronto, Canada, several months ago to campaign support for the affair, which will fete the first batch of graduates from the high school where I myself had been graduated from just a while back. Tom Garcia, my neighbor-buddy in the olden days in Mangatarem now based in Cagayan de Oro, and now New York-based Renato and Muriel Valdez are joining the party, too. Cheers!

* * *

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Ort/Tri)—Beautiful Mind (2), Paige (8), Iron King (5), Scarlet Skyterror (4).

Race 2—(Penta/Tri)—Take A Strike (1), Virgin Island (9), Uncle (8), Guest House (10), Courage Heart (6).

Race 3—(Ort/Tri)—Premiere Act (7), Red Phoenix (8), Empire State (1), Sound Of The Wind (2).

Race 4—(Super 6/Tri)—Chariot of Fire (8), Win After Win/Sir Golden Score (6), Golden Pharaoh (11), Surprise Target (10), Guad (1), Honor Dance/Great Honor (3).

Race 5—(Ort/Tri)—Astronaut (1), Queen of Gala (5), She's An Angel (4).

Race 6—(Penta/Tri)—Ingay Ingay (1), Silver Eagle/Cash McCall (4), Road Runner (11), Cool Turner (10)

Race 7—(Penta/Tri)—Iron Hand (6), Sutter's Quest (8), Cheers (3), C Tonet (4), Andorra (3).

Race 8—(Ort/Tri)—Guided Missile (4), Bomb Shell (5), Fastfeller (7), Korek Ka Dyan (8).

Race 9—(Super 6/Ort/Tri)—Western Dancer (12), Scarlet Beauty (9), Wrecking Ball (6), Magical Surf (13).

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World Slasher Cup today at Big Dome

THE WORLD SLASHER CUP INVITATIONAL 8-COCK DERBY, CONSIDERED the biggest cockfighting event in the world, unfolds at the Araneta Coliseum today. The bi-annual event will have its two-cock semifinals on Thursday and the four-cock finals on Saturday. Expected to vie for the World Slasher title are prominent cockers from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Guam, Japan along with the Philippines' master gamefowl breeders. Local entries in the event presented by Pizza Hut and co-sponsored by Thunderbird power pellets and San Miguel Corp. B-meg Derby Ace feeds will be fielded by, among others, Patrick Antonio, Nene Araneta, Rudy Albano, Claude Bautista, Rey Briones, Gerry Espina, Tony Tan, Tony Marfori, Eddie Araneta, Ito Ynares, Ronnie Puno, Rudy Salud, Lito Orillaza, Danding Cojuangco, Biboy Enriquez, Boy Diaz, Ricoy and Jesry Palmares, Peping Cojuangco, Esting Teopaco and Cito Alberto. The champion's prizes include a 2006 4x2 pick-up along with a giant gold trophy symbolic of the world championship title for the year. Boy Marzo and Matt Bitanga are the defending champions.

Three champs join anniversary derby

THE THREE CO-CHAMPIONS OF LAST YEAR'S COMPETITION ARE AGAIN vying in the 16th Anniversary Super 6-Cock Derby at the Roligon Mega Cockpit. Wewe Burgos of Batangas, Teddy Macadagdag of Cavite and Jeric Junio of Bulacan have all confirmed participation in the derby. Scheduled on Jan. 31, Feb. 2, 4, 7 and 9, the P4 million derby is hosted by Roligon owner Rolly Ligon. The fastest win champion will get a brand-new Toyota Innova as bonus. The 2-cock elimination rounds are slated on Jan. 31, Feb. 2 and 4. The semifinals and 4-cock finals are on Feb. 7 and 9, respectively. For inquiries, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 852-9812.

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Cinema One	Kung Aagawin Mo Ang Lahat Sa Akin Ang Bukas Ay Akin Yamashita: The Tiger's Treasure Pusoy Dos Di Pwedeng Hindi Pwede
Cinemax	The Appaloosa Lady Killer (4:45 PM) The Adventures Of Brisco County Jr. National Security Sleepless In Seattle Gargoyle's Revenge (11:15PM)
CNN	Business International World News World Sport Larry King Live Business International World News Asia World News World Sport World News Asia World News World Sport
Discovery Channel	Deadliest Season In The World Rides Japan At War Zero Hour Wild Discovery Hour Asia The Sphinx Unmasked Zero Hour Crime Stories
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series Totally Spies Art Attack/Unlakelive Bunny Mickey Mouse and Friends Lilo & Stitch Sabrina, The Animated Series Totally Spies Kim Possible Mr. Bean, The Animated Series That's So Raven Wonderful World Of Disney Suite Life Of Zack And Cody Phil Of The Future Mickey Mouse and Friends Chip N Dale's Rescue Rangers Wonderful World Of Disney
ESPN	Pool Snooker Mosconi Cup 2004 Boxing Series Friday Night Fights Sportscenter Asia World Tenpin Masters '05 Pool Snooker Mosconi Cup 2004 Pro Billiards '05 Women's Trick Shot Magic Billiards Sportscenter Asia
ETC	Entertainment Tonight The Insider Change of Heart Elimidate Blind Date Fifth Wheel Knock First Ambush Makeover Seinfeld What I Like About You One Tree Hill 2 The O.C. 2 Entertainment Tonight The Insider The Tonight Show With Jay Leno
EWTN	Catholic Social Teaching Angelus (3:15 PM) ABCatholic Angel Force Angels Of God Rosary With Mother Angelica The Gospel Of John EWTN Gallery Lord, Have Mercy The Journey Home Encore Council Of Faith Good Or Evil, Who Decides? Daily Mass (SAP) Live Angelus (10:15PM) Rome Reports Web Of Faith
Fox News	Hannity & Colmes On The Record With Greta Van Susteren The O'Reilly Factor Your World With Neil Cavuto Fox & Friends Fox News Live
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako Now and Forever Date With Tiffany Dragonball Z Slam Dunk Frog Prince 24 Oras Extra Challenge Sugo Etheria Starstruck 3 Jewel In The Palace Bagay Mo Ba 101 Saksi
Hallmark Channel	Bewitched IV McLeod's Daughters IV The Lives Of The Saints Who's The Boss? II Bewitched IV The Nanny Strong Medicine Judging Amy What Kind Of Mother Are You? Family Law III (10:35PM) Strong Medicine
HBO	Chasing Liberty (3:45 PM) A Very Brady Sequel Looney Tunes Back In Action Rome Ep 09: Utica Rome Ep 10: Triumph The Missing
IBC 13	EZ Shop Home Shopping Network IBC Express Balita Pangarap Kong Jackpot Home Shopping Network ME TV IBC News Tonite Home Shopping Network
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart The Late Show With David Letterman Raw Batman Just For Laughs (Gags) Mad TV That 70s Show Arrested Development The Late Show With David Letterman The Late Show With David Letterman Comedy Central Presents South Park The Man Show
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens The Fix Mission Organization Carol Duvall Molto Mario Hot Off The Grill Good Eats Extreme Cuisine Unwrapped Passion For Dessert Second Look Look For Less Life & Style Who's Wedding Is It Anyway? Road & Track Back To Basics
MTV Philippines	MTV Screen Spring Break Diym Punk'D Pop Inc MTV Hits MTV Hits Get Spotted TRL Advance Warning Pimp My Ride MTV Hits VH1 Video Collections
MYX	Rock MYX My MYX Mellow MYX Urban MYX Take 5 MYX Versions MYX Firsts Star MYX MYXILOG Pop MYX MYX Daily Top Ten Top Of The Pops Radio MYX MYX News My MYX MYX Backtrax OPM MYX
National Geographic	Seconds From Disaster Is It Real? Air Crash Investigation Top 5 Wow! About Asia Microkillers Week Seconds From Disaster Is It Real?
NBN	Value Vision New Life TV Shopping Teledyaryo Dyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila? Tinig ng Bayan (Live) Teledyaryo Pilipinas Ngayon Na! Bantay OCW With Susan K
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues Rugrats Hey Arnold! My Life As A Teenage Robot The Adventures Of Jimmy Neutron The Fairly Odd Parents All That Naturally Sadie Romeo Drake & Josh The Fairly Odd Parents All Grown Up As Told By Ginger Rocket Power Chalkzone The Wild Thornberrys The Angry Beavers The Brothers Garcia
PBO	Markadong Hudas Headline Salvage Kadenang Bulaklak Gusto Ko Nang Lumigaya Pieta 2
Qtv	Bodyguard Striker Hungry Heart The Prince Of Tennis MMS (My Music Station) Moms Love At Aegean Sea Hotelier All In Laugh To Laugh: Ang Kulit My Guardian Baby News On Q Sana'y Muling Makapiling Groupee TV
RPN 9	TV Shopping Defenders Of The Earth Hey Arnold! Wild Thornberries Sponge Bob As Told By Ginger Entertainment Tonight The Insider The Real Gilligan's Island The Cut Paradise Hotel Newswatch Now Tuesday Night Trail
SBN 21	New Life TV Shopping Winner TV Shopping Oras Ng Himala Oras ng Kaluwalhatian Sony Bmg Video NBA Inside Stuff
Solar Sports	Copenhagen Masters 2005 Swatch FIVB World Tour '05 Capetown Men's Finals Fight QWS Ep.52-2005 Sportsdesk NBA Jam NBA Game Heat @ Lakers
Sports Plus	Golf Today ACC Basketball Texas Southern @ Boston College Ray Ban Celebrity Poker Challenge World Game Ultimate Fighting Championship Party Poker.com World Open 2005
Star Movies	Emmett's Mark The Good Shepherd MXP: Most Extreme Primate Laws Of Attraction Uptown Girls Tornado (10:35PM)
Star World	Becker The Bold & The Beautiful Hollywood Squares Whose Line Is It Anyway? Angel The Simpsons Malcolm In The Middle Star News Asia Friends Charmed (Series 8) The O.C./2006 63rd Golden Globe Awards Tru Calling/ North Shore Friends Charmed (Series 8)/2006 63rd Golden Globe Awards
Studio 23	Astroboy Get Backers Spirits Wazzup Wazzup Andromeda Smallville Point Pleasant News Central Oprah Just Shoot Me

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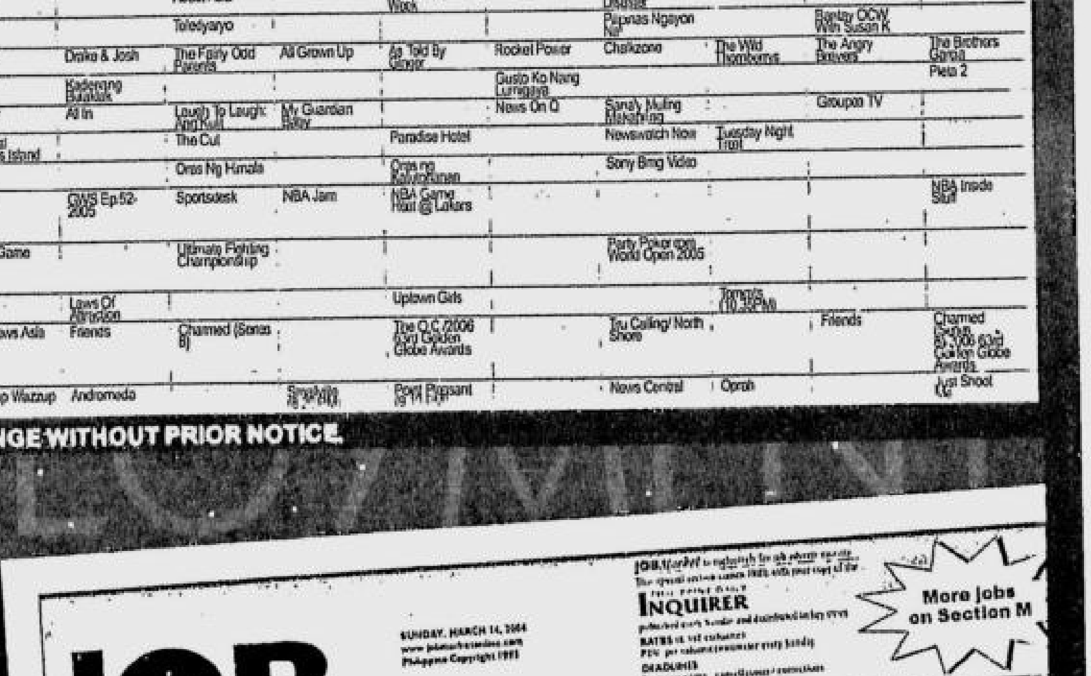

NCO organizers see bigger, better roster

CALATAGAN, BATANGAS—ORganizers of the National Caddies' Open expect a bigger field in the 2006 edition that starts at the Calatagan layout here next month.

Benjamin Abalos, a former caddy who is one of the inspirations of the tournament, and sportsman Hermie Esguerra, co-chairs of the NCO, see the next pool of talents coming from the event to be better in caliber.

"The turnout of participants we had for last year was enormous," the duo said. "Now that everyone knows that his program can truly help, we expect no less than the best players to enter the tournament."

This year's staging will be wider in scope despite the age limit of 25 and under, as the NCO will allow sons of caddies, golf course employees like greens and grounds-keepers and driving range tee boys to compete.

Aside from certified true copies of their birth certificates, participants will also have to give certifications signed by the managers of the golf clubs they will represent.

Nomination forms will be given next week. They can be faxed to the NCO secretariat at Calatagan: 0919-5470619 or Wack Wack: 027238556 on or before Feb. 10.

The tournament will play its first two rounds in Calatagan before playing the third 18 at Canlubang in Laguna and the final round at Wack Wack in Mandaluyong.

Malarayat tilt stakes Vios

LIPA CITY—A BRAND-NEW Toyota Vios will be up for grabs for anyone that scores an ace in the 8th Mount Malarayat Chairman's Cup set at the complex's three nines on Jan. 28.

Architect Antonio Turalba, chair of the Malarayat which was the site of the 89th Philippine Open last year, is inviting all members to join the 18-hole tournament.

Turalba added that guests can walk in to sign up.

"The Chairman's Cup has always been open to everyone," Turalba said. "We expect to top last year's field of more than 120."

Registration is winding down at the club's offices with members to be charged P1,500 and guests P3,000, inclusive of one practice round and giveaways that include an 18-hole gift certificate.

Trips for two to exotic destinations, including Bangkok, Thailand, and Korea, will be raffled off during the awards ceremonies that will fete a total of six division champions.

Participants are required to submit either certified National Golf Association of the Philippines or IPI Handicap indices for January.

TOMS

Toms cruises to 5-stroke win

HONOLULU, HAWAII—DAVID TOMS seized sole possession of the lead with a birdie at the first hole and never looked back Sunday, rolling to a five-stroke victory at the $4.8 million Sony Open.

Toms started the day tied for the lead with Chad Campbell. But he made only one bogey in an assured five-under-par 65 at Waialea Country Club.

Two months after undergoing a relatively routine heart procedure, he finished at 19-under 261, collecting his 12th PGA Tour victory. Toms enhanced his reputation as a front-runner, extending his record to 8-3 when taking a lead into the final round.

Campbell carded a 70 for 266, finishing tied for second with South African Rory Sabbatini who posted an impressive 62.

For the 39-year-old Toms, the victory was especially satisfying in the wake of the heart scare that sent him to hospital during a tournament in Pennsylvania and eventually saw him have surgery in November. *AFP*

Venus glow fades; Davenport sizzles

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—WIMBLEDON champion Venus Williams was knocked out of the Australian Open in the first round Monday, losing 2-6, 6-0, 9-7 to Bulgaria's Tszvetana Pironkova, ranked 94th.

It was only the third time in 34 Grand Slam tournaments that the five-time major winner has lost in the opening round.

The 10th-seeded Williams had 65 unforced errors, including 41 in the third set, as she struggled to control her groundstrokes in her first tour-level event since September.

Top-ranked Lindsay Davenport cruised to a 6-2, 6-1 win over Australian wild card entry Casey Dellacqua, ranked No. 180.

Maria Sharapova, the 2004 Wimbledon champion, had 20 winners and only faced one break point as she beat Germany's Sandra Kloesel, 6-2, 6-1, in 59 minutes.

No. 9 Elena Dementieva was the first seeded player ousted. The 24-year-old Russian, a semifinalist at the last US Open, lost 7-5, 6-2 to Germany's Julia Schruff.

On the men's side, Masters Cup champ David Nalbandian, seeded No. 4, bested Thai qualifier Danai Udomchoke, 6-2, 6-2, 1-6, 6-7 (4), 6-1.

Eighth-seeded Gaston Gaudio, the 2004 French Open champ, was leading 6-2, 5-0 when Romania's Razvan Sabau retired with an injured right elbow. No. 7 Ivan Ljubicic also advanced. *AP*

REUTERS

MARIA Sharapova serves to Sandra Kloesel.

Gebrselassie rips 2 world records

LOS ANGELES—ETHIOPIAN HAILE Gebrselassie broke the world half marathon record by 21 seconds when he clocked 58 minutes, 55 seconds in Phoenix, Arizona, on Sunday. The 32-year-old twice Olympic 10,000-meter champion also bettered the world 20km road record with a time of 55:48 en route to his half-marathon record. *Reuters*

Raptors break Knicks' streak

TORONTO—JALEN ROSE scored a season-high 31 points and the Toronto Raptors reached a franchise-high in points in ending New York's six-game winning streak with a 129-103 rout in the NBA on Sunday.

Morris Peterson added a season-high 28 and Chris Bosh had 23 for the Raptors, who surpassed the previous record of 128 points—done twice.

At Portland, Oregon, Ruben Patterson and Zach Randolph each had 16 points and seven rebounds and Portland edged Cleveland, 89-87.

LeBron James had 29 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists for the Cavaliers.

At Sacramento, California, Mike Bibby finished his career-high 42 points with two free throws with 0.4 seconds left, and Sacramento held off Orlando, 104-100. *AP*

- **SOLAR Sports will air the Miami-LA Lakers tussle at 11:30 a.m. It will be replayed at 9 p.m.**

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors, registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) and classified, at least, as IAC Medium, Sub-Category A, General Engineering or General Building and must have completed within the last ten (10) years at least one contract for the civil, structural, and mechanical/piping works which is similar to the contract under bidding amounting to at least 50% of the approved budget, to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project.

CIVIL, STRUCTURAL, AND MECHANICAL/PIPING WORKS FOR THE CONVERSION OF TONGONAN REINJECTION TO PRODUCTION WELL (1R4), MG-9D PRODUCTION WELL HOOK-UP TO SS2, AND MAHANAGDONG A SS#1 DUMPLINE TO CONCRETE SILENCER
EDC 05-187-1

The prospective contractor's experience in mechanical/piping works shall involve piping works installed in accordance to ANSI/ASME B31.1 and/or B31.3, such as power plant construction, chemical plant piping installation, refinery/petrochemical piping installation and other high-pressured piping installation for gas, steamline, etc Water supply lines installed in accordance to AWWA or equivalent shall not be considered as similar work.

The Approved Budget is **PhP 12,195,200.00** chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund The contract duration is 150 calendar days.

Application forms for eligibility and bid documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o Francis T. Tolibas local 5179) starting **January 17, 2006** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Pesos: One Thousand Five Hundred (PhP 1,500.00).**

Site inspection is on **January 26, 2006** at the Leyte Geothermal Production Field in Ormoc,Leyte. For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **February 2, 2006, 10:00 a.m.** at the BAC Conference Room, First Floor, Building V, PNOC-EDC, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila.

Sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, First Floor, Building V, PNOC-EDC, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila **not later than 2:00 p.m. (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time) of February 16, 2006** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

The Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Jan. 17 & 24, 2006

Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Pilar Street, Zamboanga City

SECTION 1. INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Brief Description of Goods : LOT 1: CI TEE, FLEXIBLE COUPLING, GATE VALVE & MECHANICAL CAP, BRASS CORPORATION COCK
LOT 2: PVC REDUCER AND BEND

The ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT, through its *internally generated funds* intend to apply the sum of *P527,000.00 for LOT 1 and P89,000.00 for LOT 2* being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under ZCWD *Purchase Requisition Nos. 8678 & 8673 for LOT 1 dated 12/14/05 & 12/13/05 respectively and PR no. 8683 dated 12/15/05 for LOT 2.* Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

The ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT now invites sealed bids from eligible Bidders for the supply/delivery of for *LOT 1: Brass Fittings and C1 Fittings and for LOT 2: PVC Fittings.* Delivery of GOODS is required by *March 17, 2006.* The description of an eligible bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules & Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process of the Eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall be advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine its responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall be then awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT and inspect the Bidding documents at the address given below during office hours (8:00-5:00 pm)

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Five Hundred Pesos per Lot (P500.00/lot). The method of payment will either thru Cash, Certified Check or Cashier's Check only. The bidding documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on January 24, 2006, 2:00 pm at this address:

2nd Floor ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT Main Office Building
Pilar Street, Zamboanga City

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below at or before 2:00 pm, January 31, 2006. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form of Cash, Certified check or Cashier's Check and in the amount of P5,270.00 for Lot 1 and P890.00 for Lot 2. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid Opening shall be on January 31, 2006, 2:00 pm at the 2nd Floor, ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT Main Office Building, Pilar St., Zamboanga City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representative's who choose to attend at the address below

The ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time or prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Mr. Noel M. Kawaguchi
Pilar St., Zamboanga City 7000
Telephone No (062) 991-1556
Fax: (062) 991-2799

(Sgd.) ARNULFO A. ALFONSO
BAC I Chairman

(PDI–January 17, 2006)

STARTS TODAY AT ARANETA COLISEUM • FIGHTS START 12 NN
BRAND NEW 2006 PICKUP WILL BE AWARDED TO CHAMPION PLUS CASH PRIZE!

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presents
THE 37th YEAR OF THE BIGGEST COCKFIGHTING EVENT IN THE WORLD!
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INVITATIONAL 8-COCK DERBY
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ARANETA COLISEUM
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THUNDERBIRD
PLATINUM
CO-SPONSORS
THUNDERBIRD
BEXAN XP

R.P. ENTRIES

Boy Marzo • Nene Abello • Patrick Antonio
Danding Cojuangco • Richard Bates • Ito Ynares
Nene Araneta • Rudy Salud • Rudy Albano
Peping Cojuangco • Esting Teopaco • Biboy Enriquez
Joel & Jet Fernando • Raymond Velayo
Butch & Jake Macasaet • Gerry Boy Espina • Frank Berin
Claude Bautista • Tony Tan • Peping Ricafort
Eddie Araneta • Boy de Roca • Ronnie Puno
Jesry & Ricoy Palmares • Madlambayan Brothers
Cesar Tan • Ompong Plaza • Eric de la Rosa
JV Magsaysay • John Capinpin • Willy Villarica
Obet Son • Pol Estrellado • Ric de Guzman
Rene Medina • William Go • Gerry Escalona
Alex Escalona • Patrick Puno • Philip Chiongbian
Jingco Bros. • Tony Trebol • Felix Trebol • Bebot Roxas
Max Roxas • Lito Orillaza • Jun Marasigan • Boyet Joson
Chito Tinsay • Boy Royo • Blandy Tolentino
Manolo Lopez • Danny Ty • Reggie Pena • Manuel Julao
Marcel Julao • Jun Julao • Dicky Lim • Frankie Uy
Roger Buenaflor • Efren Canlas • Boy Diaz • Cito Alberto
Lawrence Wacnang • Victor Sierra • Mike Romulo
Jame Uy • Anthony Lim • Boboy de los Santos
Joey de los Santos • Nonoy Gonzales • Jose Paneda
Bobby Doromal • Serge Jimenez • Sonny Lagon
Mauro Prieto • Raffy Prieto • Alex Tang • Jun Sevilla
Edwin Bacud • Ampil Bros. • Juancho Aguirre
Edwin Ramos • Raul Ebeo • Dong Ledesma
Elan Nagano • Paolo Malvar • and others

U.S. / FOREIGN ENTRIES

Roger Roberts, GEORGIA • Ray Alexander, ALABAMA
Bobby Fairchild, OKLAHOMA • Jerry Ellard, ALABAMA
Karl & Bobby Casco, HAWAII • Bruce Barnette, CALIFORNIA
Joe Sanford, CALIFORNIA • Joe Stanfield, CALIFORNIA
Johnny Moore, TENNESSEE • Jesse Smith, OKLAHOMA
Cris Nesmith, ALABAMA • Jason Campbell, ALABAMA
Norman Blount, ALABAMA • Thomas Green, ALABAMA
Richard Kelly, ALABAMA • Peter Uren, AUSTRALIA
Joey Melendres, AUSTRALIA • Sedfrey Linsangan, GUAM
Morinobu Taniguchi, JAPAN • Lloyd Bernardo, HAWAII
Brad Padgette, OREGON • Emitte San Juan, CALIFORNIA
Baby Evangelista, CALIFORNIA • Edwin Tagle, CALIFORNIA
Domy Fernandez, CALIFORNIA • Henry Fajardo, CALIFORNIA
Henry Navarro, CALIFORNIA • Speedy Gonzales, CALIFORNIA
Jorge Goitia, CALIFORNIA • Teodor Collar, CALIFORNIA
Ferdie Patam, CALIFORNIA • Toti Morales, CALIFORNIA
Elmo Gayoso, TENNESSEE • Ron Ron Huele, CALIFORNIA
Ronilo Siazon, CALIFORNIA • William Corken, ALABAMA
Christy Borovien, ALABAMA • Johnny Gonzalez, CALIFORNIA
Val Gonzalez, CALIFORNIA • Coco Gonzalez, CALIFORNIA
Mario Gonzalez, CALIFORNIA • Pol Ronnasek, ARIZONA
Dave Ward, ARIZONA • Joe Brown, TENNESSEE
Johnny Philips, GEORGIA • William Leblanc, LOUISIANA
Richard Harris, LOUISIANA • Mario Ceniza, ARIZONA
Jorge Torres, CALIFORNIA • Ed Alpaparo, CALIFORNIA
Regie Barawidan, HAWAII • and others

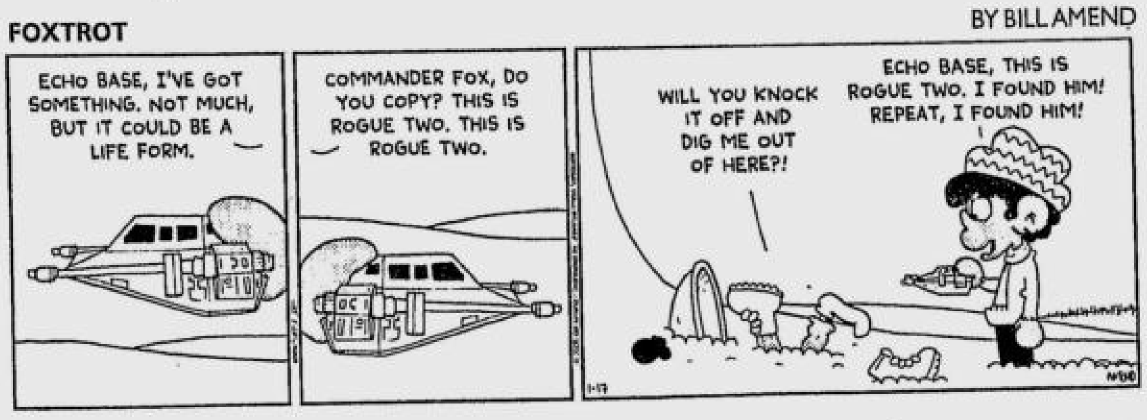
Host: Pintakasi of Champions

ComicRelief

e-mail feedback at arts@inquirer.com.ph

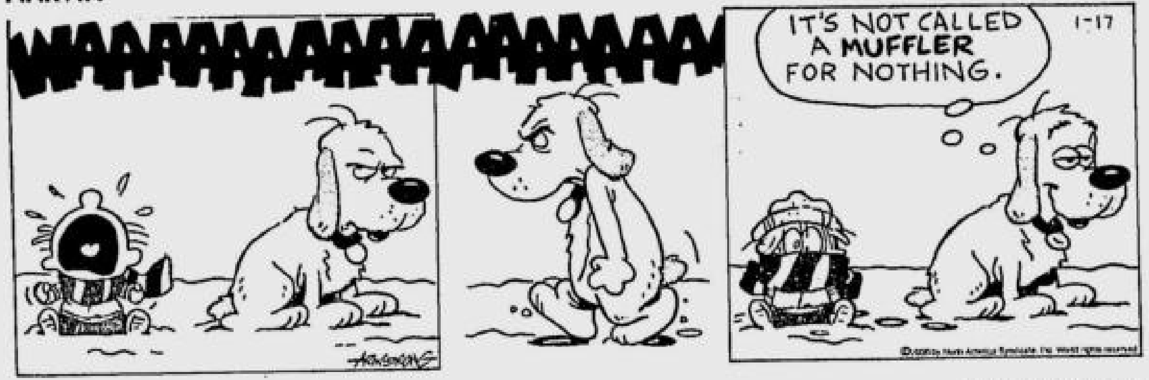
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


ECHO BASE, I'VE GOT SOMETHING. NOT MUCH, BUT IT COULD BE A LIFE FORM.
COMMANDER FOX, DO YOU COPY? THIS IS ROGUE TWO. THIS IS ROGUE TWO.
WILL YOU KNOCK IT OFF AND DIG ME OUT OF HERE?!
ECHO BASE, THIS IS ROGUE TWO. I FOUND HIM! REPEAT, I FOUND HIM!
1-17

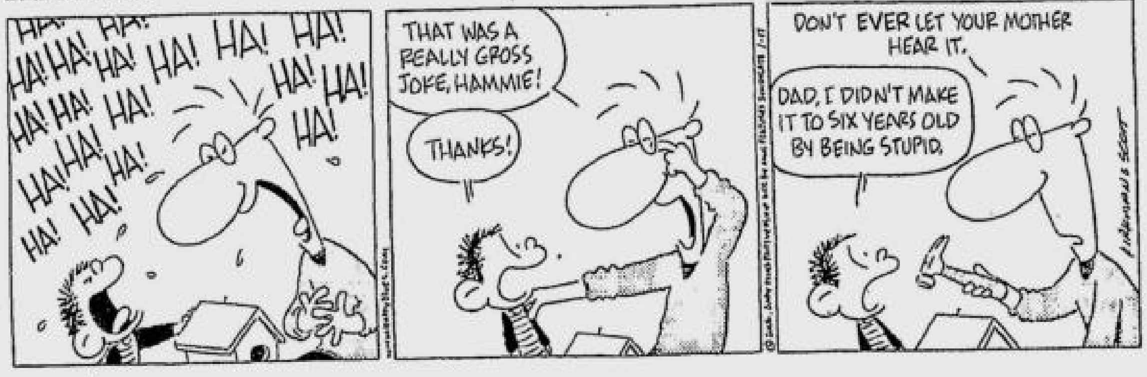
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
IT'S NOT CALLED A MUFFLER FOR NOTHING.
1-17

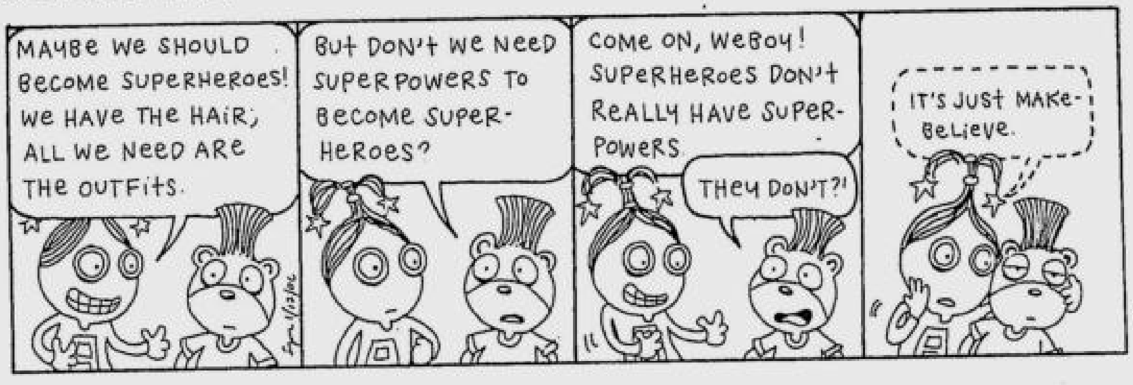
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
THAT WAS A REALLY GROSS JOKE, HAMMIE!
THANKS!
DON'T EVER LET YOUR MOTHER HEAR IT.
DAD, I DIDN'T MAKE IT TO SIX YEARS OLD BY BEING STUPID.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


MAYBE WE SHOULD BECOME SUPERHEROES! WE HAVE THE HAIR; ALL WE NEED ARE THE OUTFITS.
BUT DON'T WE NEED SUPERPOWERS TO BECOME SUPER-HEROES?
COME ON, WEBOY! SUPERHEROES DON'T REALLY HAVE SUPER-POWERS.
THEY DON'T?!
IT'S JUST MAKE-BELIEVE.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're direct, bold and forthright. You simply go after what you desire. You know what you want; you have clear goals, and you believe in the discipline necessary to achieve those goals. When you express yourself, it is always forceful. This next year could be one of the most powerful years of your life. Open any door. **Birthdate of:** Jim Carrey, actor; Benjamin Franklin, Founding Father; Muhammad Ali, heavyweight champ.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is an excellent day to talk to parents, bosses, teachers and authority figures. Mercury, the planet of communication, is lined up with Venus, the planet of diplomacy. Make your mark!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is a wonderful time to make travel plans, especially travel for pleasure. Publishing opportunities and chances to pursue further education or broaden your experience of the world are excellent.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a good day to decide how to share something with someone. It's also a good day for fundraising and settling red-tape matters connected with insurance, debt and taxes.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You couldn't pick a better day to smooth over troubled waters with a friend or partner. All discussions with others will go extremely well now!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You can sweet-talk anyone at work into doing whatever you want today. Co-workers are putty in your hands! Make the most of it. (It isn't always this easy.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Your ruler, Mercury, is lined up with fair Venus today, and you feel happy! You're creative and very much in touch with your talents. Enjoy playful activities with children.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Family discussions are warm and friendly today. Now is the time to tackle delicate subjects. People are willing to listen to what you have to say.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a good day for agreements, creating partnerships, signing contracts and making deals. Discussions and activities with siblings are smooth and friendly.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a great day to make money! Your cash flow is blessed. Therefore, you can earn money or you can spend it and get a good value.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're all charm today. All your communications with others are excellent. What a smooth schmoozer! Since both Mercury and Venus are in your sign, you can do no wrong.

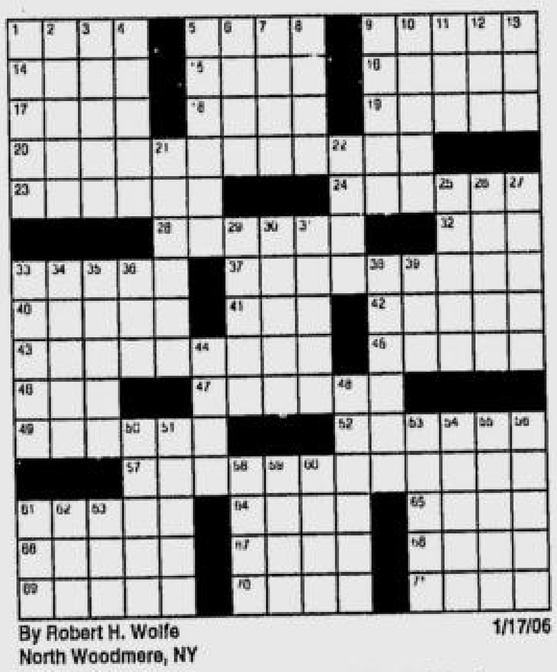
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): The beauty of solitude will appeal to you today. You'll enjoy time alone. However, it's also a good day to deal with the government.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Members of groups and organizations are happy to see you today. A friend is also happy to see your face. Enjoy dealing with others. People are warm and friendly.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Some distance
5 Actress Talbot
9 Knowing
14 Fill a hold
15 Exploitive one
16 Overdress
17 Environs
18 Marc's love
19 Type of football
20 Defoe's shop-loving heroine?
23 Whoopie's "Ghost" role
24 Essential parts
28 Move stealthily
32 Poppycock!
33 Wrist bones
37 Blackmore's sand-loving heroine?
40 At right angles to a ship's length
41 Clare of "Bleak House"
42 Sedate
43 Shaw's sow-loving heroine?
45 Pick up
46 Writer LeShan
47 At home
49 Experience a flashback
52 Save
57 Travers' nuptial-loving heroine?
61 Squeals
64 Saab model
65 Yale grads
66 Scuffle
67 Marsh bird
68 Quote an example
69 Joins by heating
70 Work units
71 Comes out with

DOWN
1 Hertz rival
2 Unit of capacitance
3 Ms. Rogers St. Johns
4 Domain
5 Atom centers
6 Madonna hit, "La __ Bonita"
7 Ager of parents
8 Yankee slugger, in headlines
9 Video-game name
10 Least satisfactory
11 Birthday count
12 Dash
13 Ecol. watchers
21 Daughter of Mohammed
22 Tied
25 Oranjestad's country
26 One not comfy in company
27 Howard or Isaac
29 Like Jane Eyre
30 Commotions
31 Certain Algerian
33 Prank
34 Stomach
35 Majestic
36 Ms. Dawber
38 Logging Z's
39 Deer mama
44 City north of Brussels
48 Slobbers
50 Fix deeply
51 Decorative jars
53 Eyeglasses, casually
54 Eyelashes
55 Oneness
56 Mississippi quartet?
58 Not common
59 Birthdays' separation
60 Bluenose
61 Autobahn auto
62 Actress Romick
63 Part of APB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By Robert H. Wolfe
North Woodmere, NY

1/17/06

Monday's Puzzle Solved

T	H	U	S		C	I	A	O		W	E	L	D	S
R	O	S	E		R	S	V	P		H	A	I	L	E
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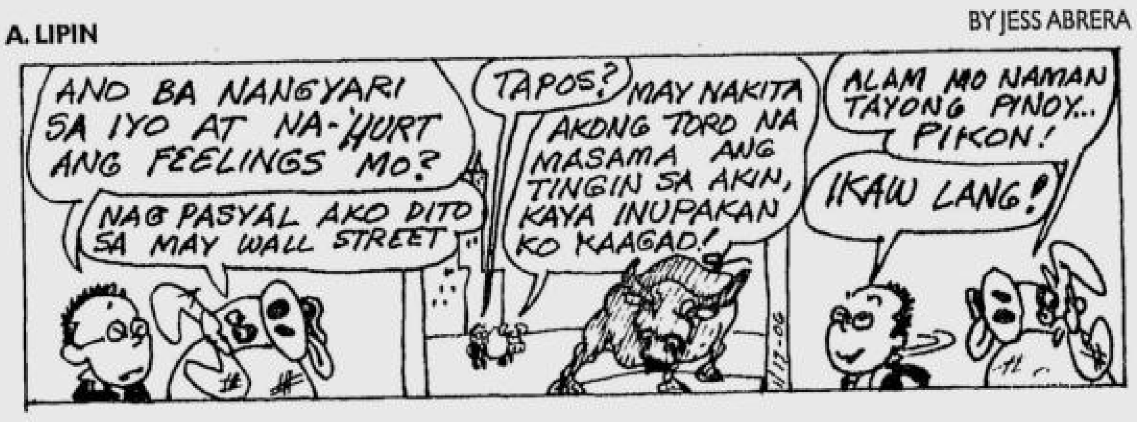
1/17/06

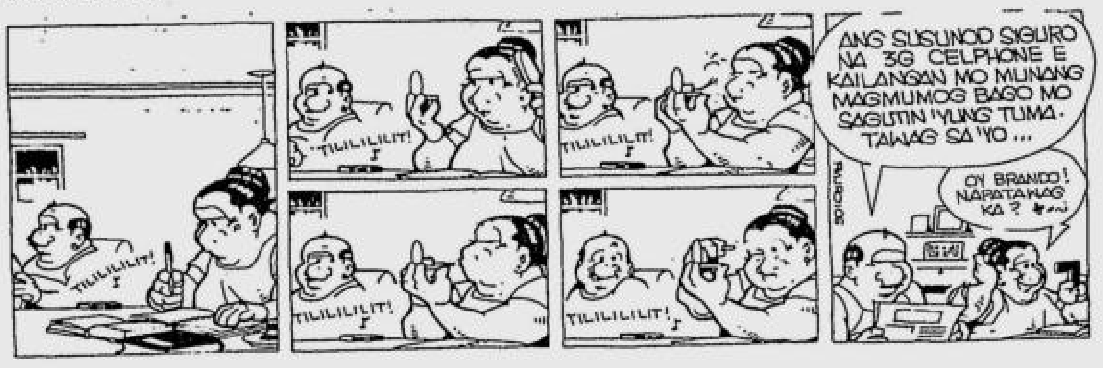
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ANO BA NANGYARI SA IYO AT NA-'HURT ANG FEELINGS MO?
NAG PASYAL AKO DITO SA MAY WALL STREET
TAPOS?
MAY NAKITA AKONG TORO NA MASAMA ANG TINGIN SA AKIN, KAYA INUPAKAN KO KAAGAD!
ALAM MO NAMAN TAYONG PINOY... PIKON!
IKAW LANG!
1-17-06

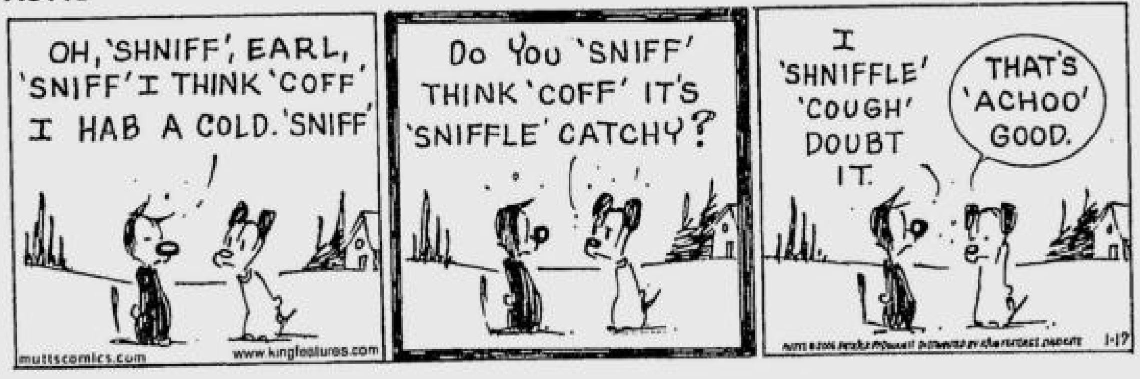
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


TILILILILIT!
TILILILILIT!
TILILILILIT!
TILILILILIT!
TILILILILIT!
ANG SUSUNOD SIGURO NA 3G CELPHONE E KAILANGAN MO MUNANG MAGMUMOG BAGO MO SAGUTIN 'YUNG TUMA-TAWAG SA 'YO...
OY BRANDO! NAPATAWAG KA?

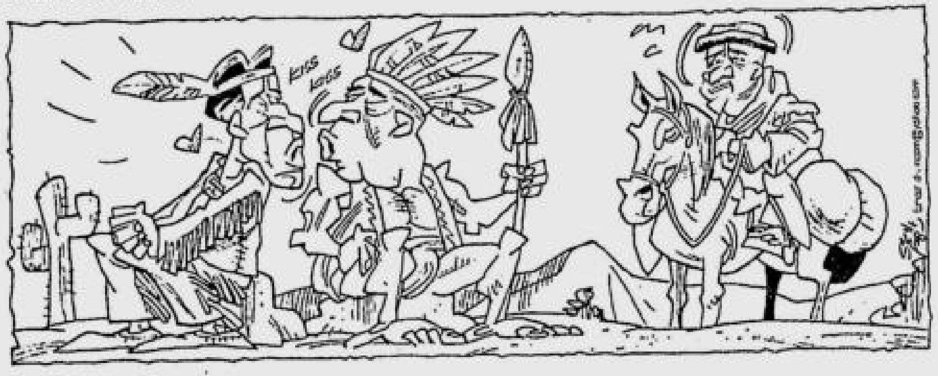
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


OH, 'SHNIFF', EARL, 'SNIFF' I THINK 'COFF' I HAB A COLD. 'SNIFF'
DO YOU 'SNIFF' THINK 'COFF' IT'S 'SNIFFLE' CATCHY?
I 'SHNIFFLE' 'COUGH' DOUBT IT.
THAT'S 'ACHOO' GOOD.
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
1-17

DIVINE COMEDY

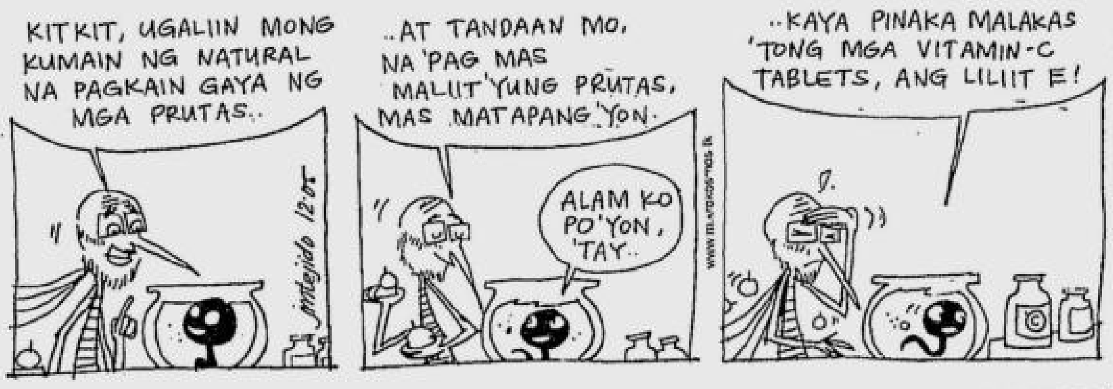
BY STEVEN PABALINAS



FRANCISCAN
FRIAR
JUNIPERO
SERRA
DISCOVERS
SAN FRANCISCO,
CALIFORNIA

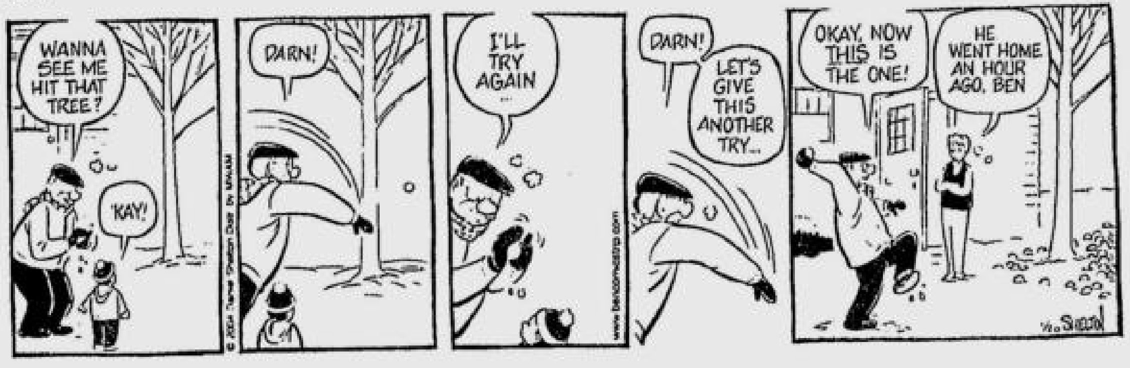
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


KITKIT, UGALIIN MONG KUMAIN NG NATURAL NA PAGKAIN GAYA NG MGA PRUTAS..
..AT TANDAAN MO, NA 'PAG MAS MALIIT 'YUNG PRUTAS, MAS MATAPANG 'YON.
ALAM KO PO 'YON, 'TAY..
..KAYA PINAKA MALAKAS 'TONG MGA VITAMIN-C TABLETS, ANG LILIIT E!
jmtejido 12.05

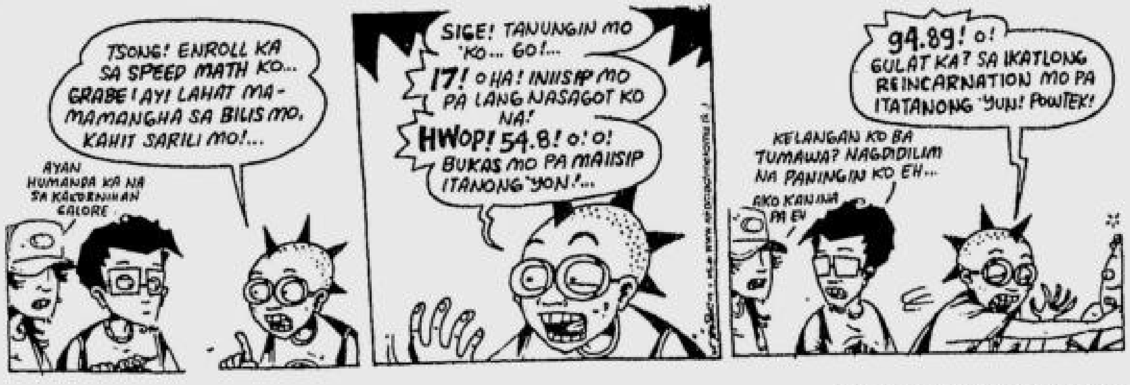
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


WANNA SEE ME HIT THAT TREE?
'KAY!
DARN!
I'LL TRY AGAIN
DARN!
LET'S GIVE THIS ANOTHER TRY...
OKAY, NOW THIS IS THE ONE!
HE WENT HOME AN HOUR AGO, BEN

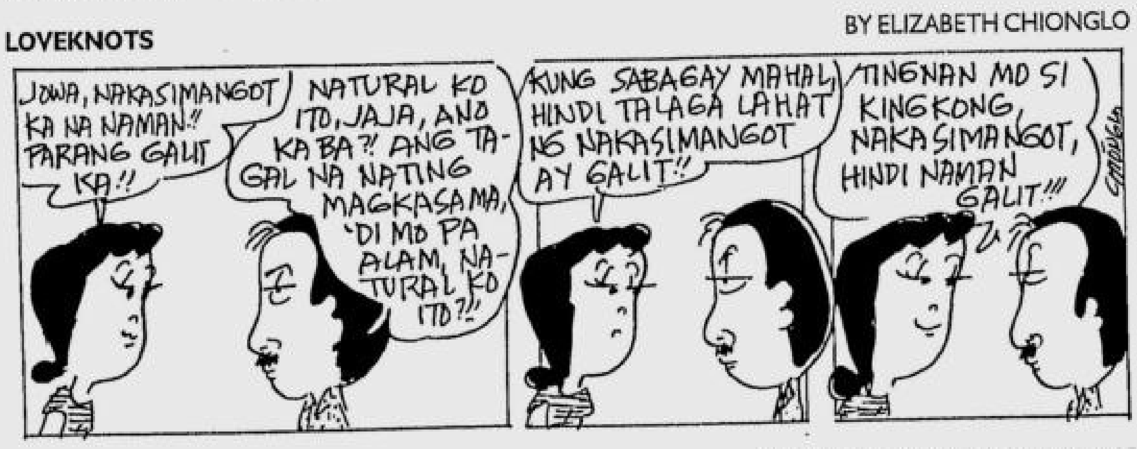
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


TSONG! ENROLL KA SA SPEED MATH KO... GRABE! AY! LAHAT MA-MAMANGHA SA BILIS MO. KAHIT SARILI MO!...
AYAN HUMANDA KA NA SA KAGORNIHAN GALORE
SIGE! TANUNGIN MO 'KO... GO!...
17! OHA! INIISIP MO PA LANG NASAGOT KO NA!
HWOP! 54.8! O! O! BUKAS MO PA MAIISIP ITANONG 'YON!...
94.89! O! GULAT KA? SA IKATLONG REINCARNATION MO PA ITATANONG 'YUN! POWTEK!
KELANGAN KO BA TUMAWA? NAGDIDILIM NA PANINGIN KO EH...
AKO KANINA PA EH

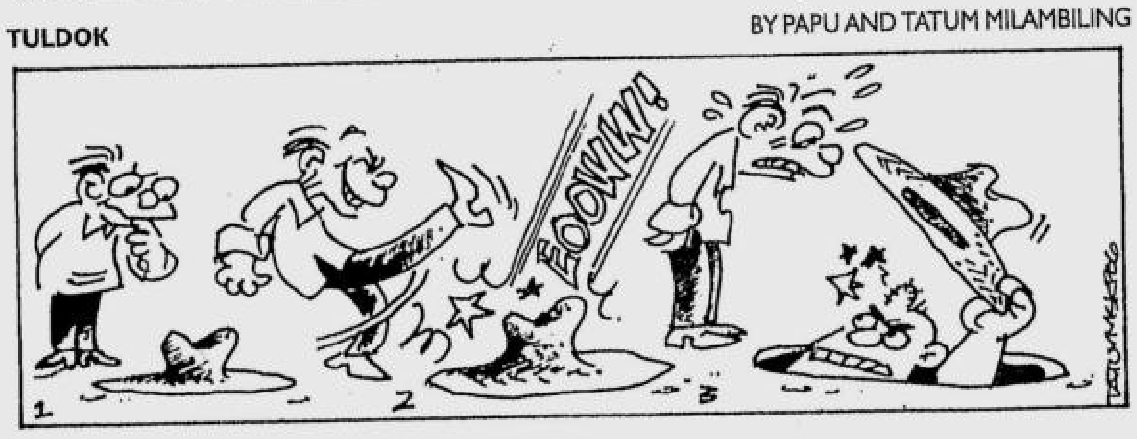
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JOWA, NAKASIMANGOT KA NA NAMAN!! PARANG GALIT KA!!
NATURAL KO ITO, JAJA, ANO KA BA?! ANG TAGAL NA NATING MAGKASAMA, 'DI MO PA ALAM, NATURAL KO ITO?!!
KUNG SABAGAY MAHAL, HINDI TALAGA LAHAT NG NAKASIMANGOT AY GALIT!!
TINGNAN MO SI KINGKONG, NAKASIMANGOT, HINDI NAMAN GALIT!!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING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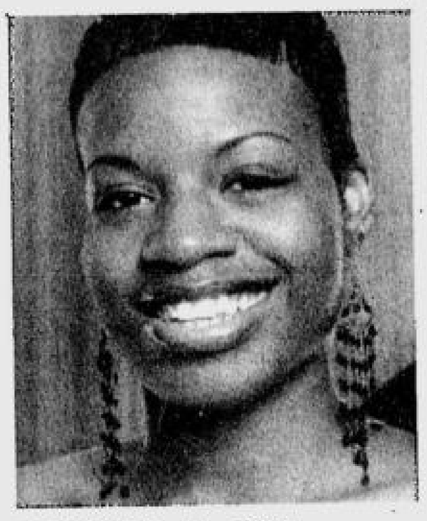
Editor Emmie G. Velarde

KELLY Clarkson, 2002



FANTASIA Barrino, 2004

CARRIE Underwood, 2005

RP movies for India

Trade mission eyes 'big market' for film products

By Marinel R. Cruz

VIC DEL ROSARIO, movie producer and presidential consultant for entertainment, has sent a representative to join former president Fidel Ramos on a trade mission to India to "explore possibilities of selling Filipino [film] products to Indian viewers."

Del Rosario reported this to INQUIRER Entertainment in an interview last week. Ramos' 25-member team flew to India on Jan. 15 to attend the "Partnership Summit 2006" in Calcutta.

"There's a big market there for Pinoy films and TV shows," said Del Rosario, also the executive producer of Viva Entertainment Inc. "We're hoping to learn from them as well. India has many experts in animation, among many other specializations. Indian artists provide the technical requirements of most Asian films."

Del Rosario noted that India is the home of Bollywood movies, world-famous Hindi-language films from Mumbai. In fact, India's movie industry has the largest output in the world. "We hope to buy some of those films and show them in our country," he said.

Last November, Del Rosario inked a three-year deal with World Media Entertainment for the airing next month in Malaysia, Indonesia and

RP MOVIES/ A2-2

Who will be the next 'American Idol'?

By Kathryn L. Reyes

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The search for the next "American Idol" has begun, and the reality show starts airing on worldwide television tomorrow.

One thing about this wildly popular program: It has made celebrities out of some non-winners as well.

Remember William "She Bangs" Hung? He didn't even make it past the auditions in Season 3 (2004) but he was the first from that batch to cut a double-CD. He made television history just by being annoyingly funny! TVguide.com recently reported that the infamous hopeful is on No. 80 of the website's "100 Most Unexpected TV Moments."

Another also-ran who continues to be very visible is Clay Aiken. Voted the Most Loved Star of All Time From a Reality Show in an online poll, his last TV appearance was on Diane Sawyer's "Good Morning America."

Aiken was runner -p to Ruben Studdard in Season 2, but his album sales and fan base have surpassed Studdard's.

Meanwhile, Studdard's debut album, "Soulful," released in 2003, shot up to No. 1 on the Billboard chart in its first week. "Superstar," a single from that album, earned Studdard a Grammy award nomination in 2004. He also recorded a gospel album that made No. 20 in Bill-

WHO/ A2-2

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6 GOLD (SRD) "ZATHURA" SNEAK PREVIEW
7 GOLD (DOLBY) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 (DOLBY STEREO) DON'T GIVE UP ON US
9 (DOLBY STEREO) ENTENG KABISOTE -2
10 (DOLBY STEREO) AKO LEGAL WIFE

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4 (DTS) KING KONG

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3 (DTS EX) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 ENTENG KABISOTE -2

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2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
3 (DOLBY) THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
4 (DTS) ENTENG KABISOTE -2

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1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 AKO LEGAL WIFE
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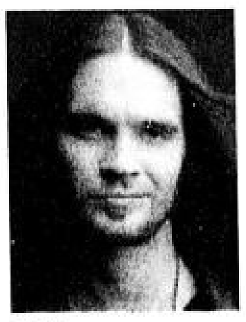
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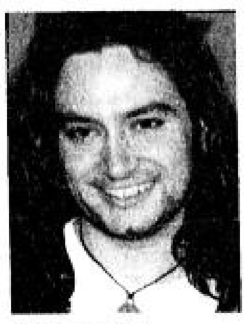

MAROULIS

Who will be the next . . .

From page A2-1

board's Top 200 chart.

The very first 'Idol,' Kelly Clarkson, recently won the People's Choice Award for Favorite Female Singer and has been nominated for Best Female Pop Performance in the forthcoming Grammy Awards. Her first album, "Thankful," debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and her second album, "Breakaway," has gone five times platinum. Seeing an edgier Clarkson in her latest work, critics agree she's here to stay.

Worthy of stardom

Season 3 champ Fantasia Barrino was nominated in last year's Vibe Magazine Awards for R&B Voice of the Year. She lost to Mariah Carey. And though it took a while before she released her first album—she is also the only AI winner whose debut album did not land the charts in its first week—she received four Grammy nominations and two American Music Award nods last year. Now she goes by the single name Fantasia. She has also written "Life Is Not A Fairytale," her autobiography.

Fantasia's batchmate, Fil-Am Jasmine Trias, made it to top three in the 2004 edition. Born to Filipino parents and raised in Hawaii, Jasmine came home to big-time endorsement deals right after her AI stint. Her self-titled debut album was released in the US last year.

Her latest appearance on local TV was on the "Promdi" episode of "Extra Challenge" where she was made to catch frogs in a swamp.

Rockers on AI

Last year's AI marked the entry of rock 'n' roll to the largely pop show. Two contestants led this refreshing change—Bo Bice, who finished second, and Constantine Maroulis.

Bice has since gotten married, become a father and undergone a major surgery. He also released his first album, "The Real Thing," where he collaborated with Bon Jovi's Richie Sambora and Nickelback's Dan Kroeger, and which made it to No. 4 of Billboard's albums chart last month. Carrie Underwood, last season's winner, was on No. 2. Maroulis visited the Philippines last November to star in a series of mall shows.

Back in the US, Maroulis is now doing a TV sitcom on ABC. TV acting should come easy for this New Yorker with a Broadway background.

Underwood again beat Bice in Billboard's countdown last month.

Her "Inside Your Heaven" quickly became the Top-Selling Hot 100 Song of the Year and Top-Selling Country Single of the Year. She was also 2005's Country Single Sales Artist of the Year. Oklahoma Today magazine also named her "2005 Oklahoman of the Year."

Cashing in on her good looks as well, Carrie has announced on her website that she will appear in a prom pictorial on Cosmo magazine's Winter/Spring 2006 Prom Collection.

"American Idol" itself was 2005's People's Choice Awardee for Favorite Reality Show Competition. Small wonder, then, that thousands of hopefuls turned up as usual in seven US cities where auditions for this season were held.

And as AI host Ryan Seacrest says after every episode, "Who will be the next American Idol?"

There's only one way to find out.

"American Idol" will be aired live on Star World, Wednesdays and Thursdays starting tomorrow at 6 p.m. (live via satellite) and 8 p.m. (prime time replay). ABC 5 airs it on the same days at 10 p.m.

Warning vs fatal attractio

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

I AM NOT WRITING THIS AS JUST ANother guessing-game material. It's too sensitive to be lumped with the usual blind items. I got quite affected when a network insider told me the sad, sad story. This should serve as a warning for people who become obsessed with some movie stars, bordering on fatal attraction. It must also be a wake-up call for stars who give their admirers false hopes. Then again, this also happens to ordinary people.

Here's the tragic story: A young actress and the lesbian assistant director of her *telenovela* were secretly going steady. Of course they didn't want to jeopardize her love team with a matinee idol/actor. The assistant director used to go out with a model/host and a morning show segment host also from the same network. Soon enough, the young actress wanted out. It devastated the AD, who committed suicide—but not before she called the actress to say goodbye. I wonder how this actress can wear a happy face on cam and live with the guilt. The actress has yet to talk with the AD's family to resolve matters. Ahhh! Love can sometimes be the ultimate tragedy.

Is it true that **Jennylyn Mercado**'s manager **Becky Aguila** is spreading rumors that **Marian Rivera** (**Mark Herras**' current squeeze) already has a kid? Is she out to spite Mark, who happens to be the ex of her ward Jen, because Mark is vocal about his love for Marian? Jen has said that she's gotten over Mark. How can she move on if her manager can't seem to remove Mark from the picture? Move and remove, girl!

Heard from my friends at GMA 7's newsroom that my "crush," newscaster Ivan Mayrina got hitched to his longtime girlfriend Karen (a Kyla look-alike). That crushed my heart (he...he...) and I'm sure a lot of Ivan's admirers share my sentiments. Be may, here's to Ivan's happiness. He the genuinely nice guys I have ever source says the newlyweds are their firstborn. May you LOVE hap after, Ivan and Karen!

From 3 hunks

I TEXTED **Marvin Agustin** to co him for his MMFF Best Actor awa asked for his reaction to the filmfes ha. He texted back, " I'm too gra happy to be bothered by such contr can't ask for anything more." Right vs. The scandal doesn't make you award-winning actor.

I texted **Polo Ravales** and te about **Ara Mina**. He replied: "We a closer now." I texted back and te "Behind closed doors?" He replied ha!" Polo and Ara make a gorgeous Ara put it so aptly, "At least *si* Polo *bi*

I texted **Alfred Vargas** (whom I' since his Ateneo days—I'm glad t hasn't changed him a bit) and ask his plans for 2006. His answer: "I w good films this year. I've been hun challenging roles. This year I'll int fix my [schedule] to accommodate jects. Even digital films."

'Men's Room' reloaded

A SURVIVAL guide for guys cal

'Text votes' compromise

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WHEN TALENT COMPETITIONS BEcame popular on television, the winners and losers were decided on by experts tapped to serve as judges. So, the major problems were the qualifications, objectivity and incorruptibility of those jurors.

These days, however, the judging equation has been made more complex with the inclusion of "text votes" from viewers.

The "logic" of this development is quite clear: Since talent searches are supposed to discover tomorrow's stars whom the public will embrace, the public should have a hand in choosing the winners of those talent tilts.

Trouble is, in some instances, the text votes a leading contestant gets don't really reflect what the viewing public wants!

The reason for this is the expensive ploy of some candidates' relatives, friends and other backers: they themselves pay for hundreds and even thousands of text votes, to make sure that their bet wins.

So, the text votes don't necessarily denote popularity, just the loyalty, determination and deep pockets of some contestants' supporters.

Adding to the dubious nature of the text voting component is the fact that it's a money-earner, not just for the phone company, but for the talent search shows as well.

Since more text votes generate greater income, the shows are tempted to raise their competition and controversy quotients, so that contestants' backers whipped up to fever pitch, and c and spend more for text votes.

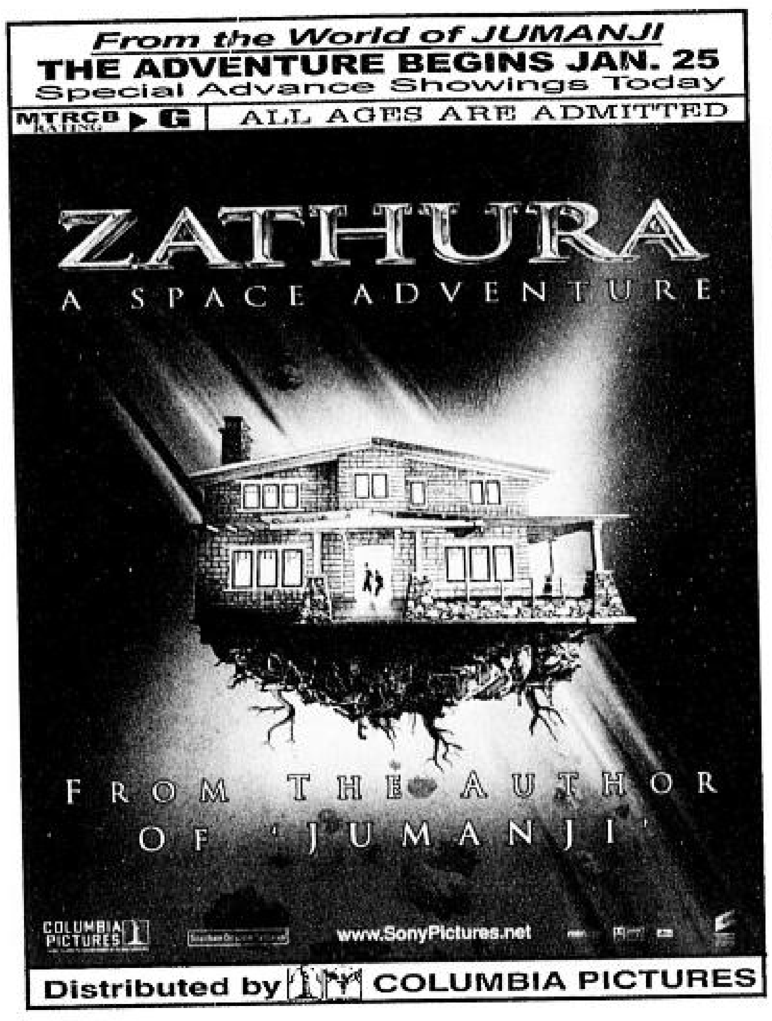
This hyped-up competition subje body involved to excessive stress an ity that youthful contestants shouldn contend with. The TV station wins, everyone else loses out.

Worst of all, the text vote co flawed as it is, sometimes results serving contestants being hailed ners. Isn't this what talent searche supposed to do?

As a result of the wrong tale chosen as winners, some of the ous" young performers don't c well with the audience, and lose ter after only a few months. So the genuine stellar advantage her

To rectify this unproductive a trary situation, the text vote co should be rigorously controlled. be resorted to, its impact should b to only 25 percent of the total verd the experts' decision accounting f maining 75 percent.

That should inhibit the co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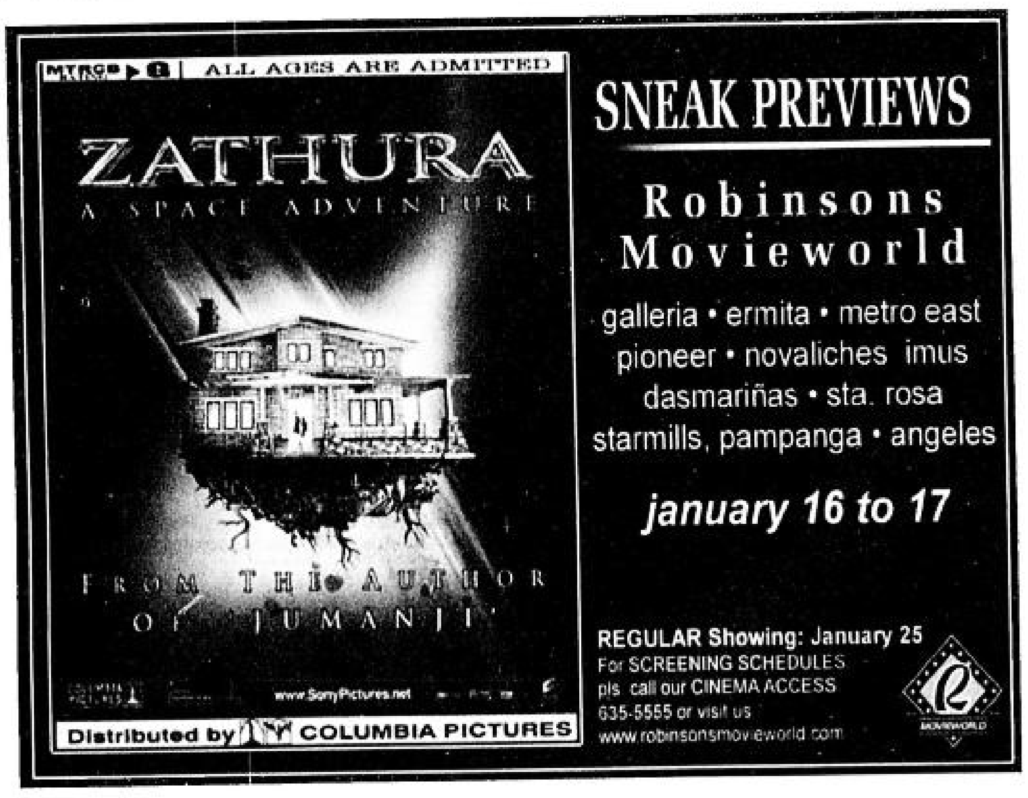
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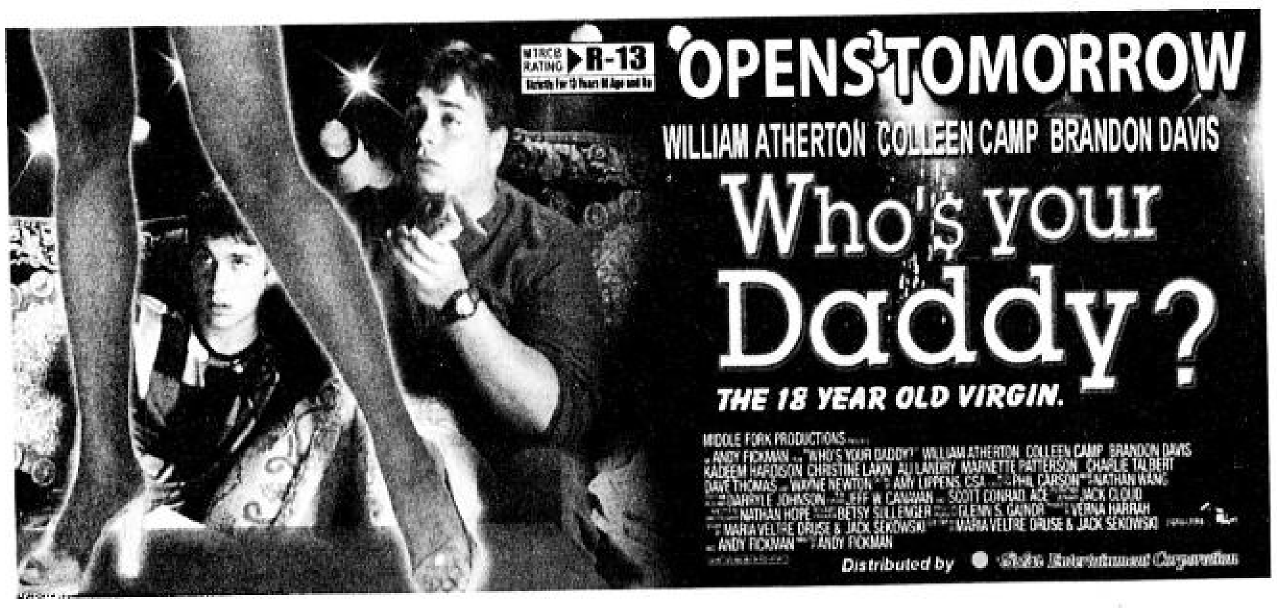
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THE 18 YEAR OLD VIRGIN.
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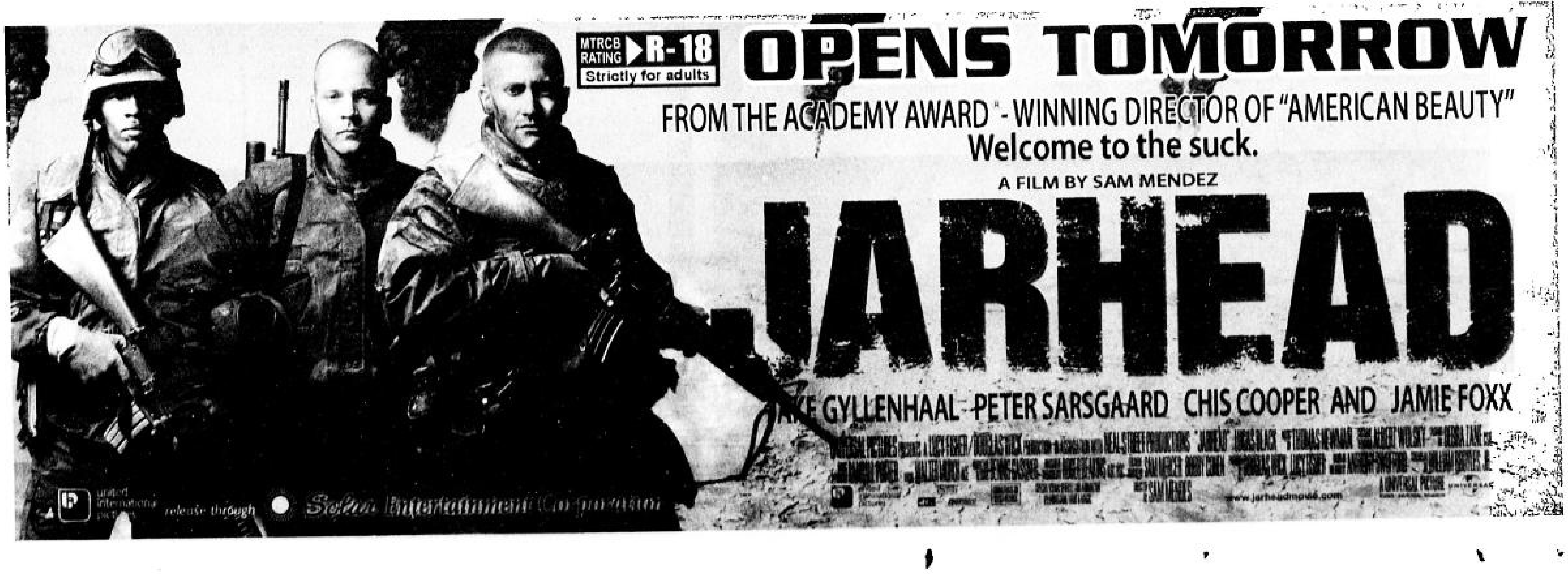
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AINMENT

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Men's Room" is getting very good feedback from viewers about the show's new format. Viewers are hooked on the show's segments on fashion, sports, grooming and, of course, beautiful girls. "Ambushed" is one of them—guys have a chance to know what girls really think about men and what they want.

It's obvious there's very good chemistry between hosts **RJ Ledesma** and Rovilson Fernandez. It's not surprising, either, that stand-up comedian **Mike Unson's** segment is being followed by many viewers. This guy is really funny!

Honestly, it is a personal favorite of mine! These three guys click and they make late night TV funny and entertaining. Catch "The Men's Room," Wednesdays, 11:30 p.m. on Studio 23.

Jukebox queens

I ENJOYED pigging out with my beloved colleagues—**Tita Crispina Belen, Ian Farinas, Jun Lalin, KC Guerero** and **Don Don Sermino**—at the birthday bash of **Regina Cabral** which was also a blessing cum soft opening of Osang's (Wilson St., Greenhills). The resto serves sumptuous food and delicacies from various provinces. I swear their *sugpong hipon* is the largest and juiciest I have ever tasted!

Boasts **Rosanna "Osang" Canlas**, one of the owners, along with "Jukebox Queen" **Claire de la Fuente:** "We not only serve the best-tasting Filipino food; we satisfy cravings for regional delicacies. Different kinds of *lechon* from Davao, Bacolod and Cebu can be bought or ordered in advance from Osang's."

The other "Jukebox Queens" **Eva Eugenio** and **Imelda Papin** have savored the yummy dishes. Truly a feast for a king and/or (jukebox) queen.

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com)

talent searches

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backers from spending so much money to tilt the voting balance in favor of their bets.

Of course, that doesn't solve the problem some shows have with their "expert" judges. *That's* another area that urgently cries out for reform.

Talent searches' young contestants deserve to be judged by genuine experts who can reliably and objectively tell which new performer is better than the others.

In addition, the jurors should not be tempted to come up with pithy, colorful, "quotable" put-downs to build up their own cachet as "bitchy" TV personalities. Concentrate on the young contestants and forget about yourself and your gargantuan ego, please!

Also, don't resort to sarcasm or personal attacks, because they could adversely affect a newcomer's psychological wellbeing. Show business is *not* a fraternity that young talents should have to be "initiated" into!

Finally, the TV talent search shows have to deal with some people's perception that the choice of finalists and winners could be rigged in favor of some well-connected bets. We hear of some judges themselves who have grumbled about this pressure.

So, from here on in, *everything* about TV talent searches should be absolutely transparent and above-board. If everyone involved hews strictly to that bottom line, talent searches' decisions will gain the respect of the viewing public, as they must.

P movies
or India

From page A2-1

ei—through satellite opera-
stro—of over 750 films pro-
d by Viva Entertainment.
presidential consultant, Del
rio said, he is also intent on
ing an organization that
d help unite independent and
stream film producers.
here are two major groups of
e producers, but most of the
bers are not active," he ex-
ed. "I think it's best to just
bine them. [It will be] similar
e association of theater own-
the country. *Nag-iisa—kaya*
tag sila (There's only one, so
rong)."
el Rosario said the new group
hold consultations, facilitated
ctive" producers, on how the
industry could be improved.
need to hear them out so that
conflicts arise, we could eas-
d ways to solve it," he said.
his latest report to Mala-
ng, Del Rosario proposed,
ng others, that Big Foot Enter-
nent, the Hollywood produc-
company in Cebu, be granted
ptions from import taxes and
s on film equipment.
he president has finally [ap-
ed] our request," said Del
rio.
g Foot Entertainment has in-
d $30 million to operate and
school and world-class sound
on Mactan Island. It is "will-
o invest $120 million more,"
Rosario said in an earlier inter-

DID YOU KNOW...

Weeks after TV host Ethel Booba announced she had broken up with her boyfriend, former basketball player Alex Crisano, they were seen dining on Saturday at Rembrandt Hotel in Quezon City.

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DON'T GIVE UP ON US PG13 12:20,2:45,5:10, 7:35,10:00	**ST. ANGE** R13 12:50,3:00,5:10,7:20,9:30	**CHRONICLES OF NARNIA** GP 1:10,4:10,7:10,10:10

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1 KINGKONG
11:30, 3:10, 6:50, 10:30
PG-13

2 CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30
GP

3 ZATHURA
1:35, 3:45, 5:55, 8:05, 10:15
GP

4 FAMILY STONE
1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00
PG-13

SHANG CINEPLEX

① KING KONG
MTRCB: PG-13
2:10, 5:50, 9:30

② CHRONICLES OF NARNIA MTRCB: GP
1.30, 4 20, 7.10, 10.00

③ FAMILY STONE
MTRCB: PG-13
12:00, 2:30, 5.00, 7:30, 10:00

④ ZATHURA
MTRCB GP
1.10, 3.20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50

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MTRCB GP 12.30, 3 20, 6 10, 9 00 LMF
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6:05, 9:00

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PG13
11:00, 2:40,
6:20, 10:00

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PROMENADE
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CINEMA 3 FAMILY STONE
PG13
10:45, 1:00, 3:15,
5:30, 7:45, 10:00

CINEMA 4 ZATHURA - GP
sneak preview
10:50, 1:05, 3:20,
5:35, 7:50, 10:05

CINEMA 5 NARNIA
GP
10:30, 1:20, 4:15,
7:10, 10:05

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AKO, LEGAL WIFE 1:40 / 4:20 / 7:00 / 9:40	FAMILY STONE 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40	NARNIA 11:50 / 1:10 / 2:40 / 4:00 5:30 / 6:50 / 8:20 / 9:40	NARNIA 12:30 / 3:20 / 6:10 / 9:00
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX	ST. ANGE 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30	BEAUTIFUL BOXER 1:50 / 4:20 / 6:50 / 9.20	ONLY P120 ADMISSION GLOBE PLATINUM P249 P299

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1	DON'T GIVE UP ON US 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30	2	NARNIA 12:00 / 2:40 / 5:20 / 8:00	3	KING KONG 12:30 / 4:20 / 8:10
4	EXODUS 12:00 / 2:00 / 4:00 / 6:00 / 8:00	5	ZATHURA 11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35		DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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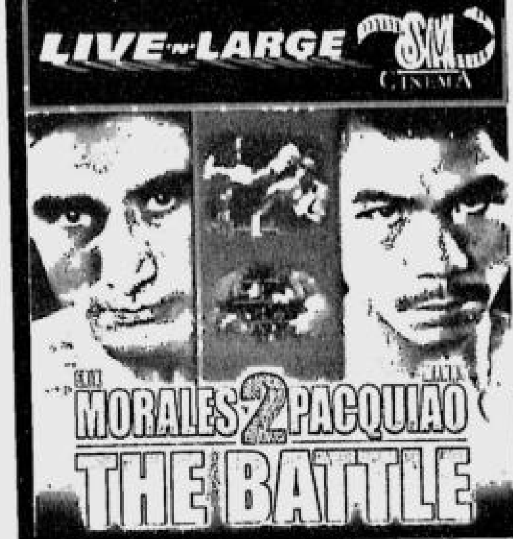

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1 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
02:10FS/02:40MF/05:35
08:00LFS/08:30LMF/10:50END
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
12:00FS/12:25MF/03:20/06:15
08:40LFS/09:10LMF/11:30END
MEGAMALL
1 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
11:00FS/11:25MF/01:45/
09:20LFS/09:40LMF/12:50END

CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 KING KONG
10:50FS/11:00MF/02:30/06:00
09:10LFS/09:30LMF/12:35END
2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
11:00FS/11:10MF/01:45/04:20/06:55
09:15LFS/09:30LMF/11:50END
3 BLUE MOON
11:20FS/11:30MF/01:30/03:30/05:30/07:30
09:15LFS/09:30LMF/11:15END

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 NARNIA
4 NARNIA
5 FAMILY STONE
6 ZATHURA
7 ST. ANGE
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
11 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12 BLUE MOON

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 NARNIA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 KING KONG
4 ZATHURA
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE
7 FAMILY STONE
8 EXODUS
9 BLUE MOON
10 ST. ANGE

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 ZATHURA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 NARNIA
4 KING KONG

SM VALENZUELA
1 ZATHURA
2 NARNIA
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 BLUE MOON
2 ST. ANGE
3 NARNIA
4 KING KONG
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 NARNIA
8 EXODUS
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 FAMILY STONE
11 ZATHURA
12 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 ZATHURA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 NARNIA
5 EXODUS
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
7 BLUE MOON
8 KING KONG
9 ST. ANGE
10 RESERVED

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 NARNIA
2 NARNIA
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 ZATHURA

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 ST. ANGE
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 KING KONG
4 ST. ANGE
5 RESERVED
6 AKO LEGAL WIFE
7 NARNIA
8 ZATHURA

SM [illegible]
1 KING KONG
2 ST. ANGE
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 NARNIA
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 ZATHURA
7 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
8 MULAWIN THE MOVIE
9 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10 AKO LEGAL WIFE
11 BLUE MOON
12 NARNIA

SM [illegible]
1 ZATHURA
2 NARNIA
3 KING KONG
4 BLUE MOON
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 NARNIA
2 ZATHURA
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 NARNIA
2 KING KONG
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM MOLINO
1 NARNIA
2 NARNIA
3 KING KONG
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM CITY BACOOR
1 ST. ANGE
2 EXODUS
3 NARNIA
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 ZATHURA
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
7 BLUE MOON
8 KING KONG

SM CITY MARILAO
1 NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 ZATHURA

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 ZATHURA

SM [illegible]
1 NARNIA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 BLUE MOOON
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

SM [illegible]
1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 NARNIA
4 EXODUS

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 NARNIA
3 BLUE MOON
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
5 EXODUS
6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
7 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
8 NARNIA

SM CITY ILOILO
1 EXODUS
2 BLUE MOON
3 NARNIA
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
5 NARNIA
6 KING KONG
7 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
8 AKO LEGAL WIFE

SM CITY DAVAO
1 NARNIA
2 KING KONG
3 AKO LEGAL WIFE
4 EXODUS
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 NARNIA

SM CITY [illegible] DE ORO
1 NARNIA
2 THE FOG
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 NARNIA

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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA • THX
1:00 3:50 6:40 9:30

2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

3 THE FAMILY STONE
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

4 ZATHURA
Sneak Preview

5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50

6 KING KONG
11:30 3:00 6:30 10:00

7 EXODUS 12:40 3:00
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 5:20 7:40 10:00

8 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

9 SAINT ANGE
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

10 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:20 2:45
BLUE MOON 5:10 7:35 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA 10:30 1:20 4:10 7:00 9:50

2 AKO LEGAL WIFE 12:00 2:00 4:00
BLUE MOON 6:15 8:05 10:00

3 ZATHURA
Sneak Preview

4 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:40

5 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50

6 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:25 7:40 10:00

7 SAINT ANGE
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:20

2 The Chronicles of NARNIA
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00

3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:15

4 KING KONG
1:35 5:10 9:00

5 SAINT. ANGE
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

6 BLUE MOON
1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00

7 ZATHURA
Sneak Preview

8 THE FAMILY STONE
1:40 4:00 6:30 9:00

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 BLUE MOON
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 EXODUS
5 KING KONG
6 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
7 THE FAMILY STONE
8 ENTENG KABISOTE 2

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

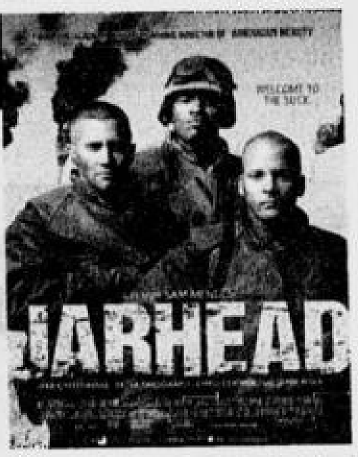
1 MULAWIN
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 SAINT ANGE

CHECK THIS OUT ▸▸

JARHEAD



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MTRCB Rating: R-18

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1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 BLUE MOON
4 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

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1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
3 KING KONG
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
5 BLUE MOON

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1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 MULAWIN the MOVIE
3 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
4 The Chronicles of NARNIA
5 ZATHURA Sneak Preview

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 The Chronicles of NARNIA
2 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
3 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
4 DON'T GIVE UP ON US

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2
2 KING KONG
3 SAINT ANGE
4 The Chronicles of NARNIA
5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
6 ZATHURA sneak Preview

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 ZATHURA Sneak Preview
2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US
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G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 FAMILY STONE	2 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	3 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 KING KONG	5 THE BEAUTIFUL BOXER	6 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA	7 AKO LEGAL WIFE
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 DON'T GIVE UP ON US	2 THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 KING KONG GUARANTEED SEATS	4 FAMILY STONE GUARANTEED SEATS	5 DON'T GIVE UP ON US GUARANTEED SEATS	
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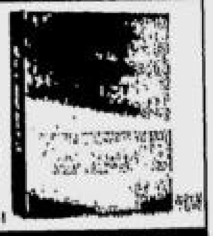

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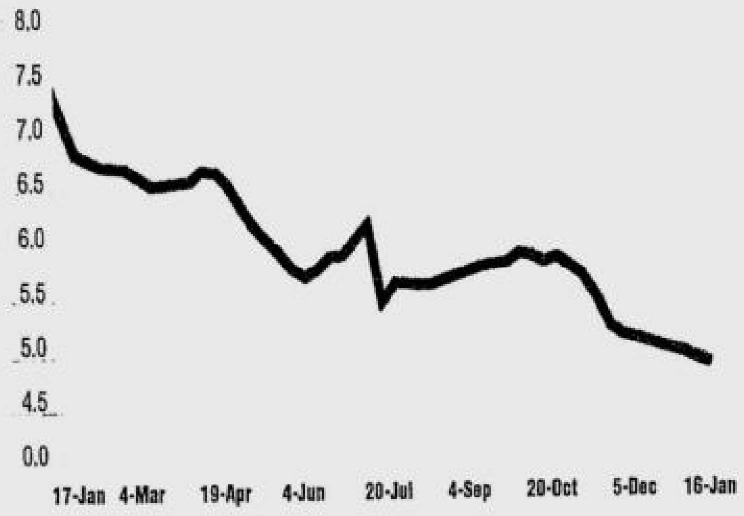
91-day T-bill rate drops to 3-year low

91-DAY TREASURY BILL RATES
Jan. 17, 2005-Jan.16, 2006



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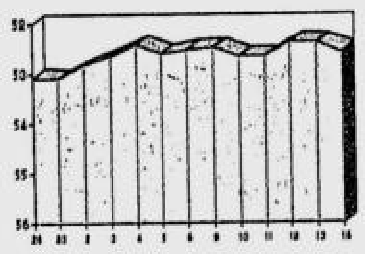


PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 52.58 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 16, 2006

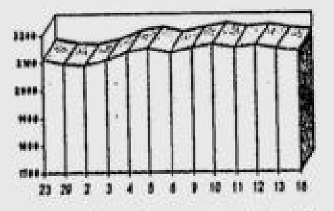
¥ 114.32 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 16, 2006

GOLD: $557.30-557.80
per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 16, 2006

STOCK MARKET

Shares down 0.5% on fresh concerns

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

SHARES YESTERDAY FELL on political concerns, spurred by the ruling party's decision to back a plan for the country to shift to parliamentary government while allowing President Macapagal-Arroyo to finish her term.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange Index was off 10.51 points, or 0.5 percent, at 2,137.76, after declining 0.5 percent Friday.

Banco de Oro was the most actively traded stock, finishing 1.4 percent higher at P36, amid the bank's offer to merge with Equitable PCI

SHARES/ B2

Decreasing gov't borrowings to push down rates

By Michelle V. Remo

TREASURY BILL RATES DROPPED ACROSS ALL tenors yesterday, with the bellwether 91-day bill registering its lowest rate since August 2002.

The bellwether 91-day T-bill rate fell to 4.863 percent—9.8 basis points lower than the previous rate of 4.961 percent—as the market remained awash with cash while it expected tightening of supply of government securities.

The 182-day bill fetched a rate of 6.314 percent, 12.1 basis points lower than last week's 6.435 percent. The rate for the 364-day bill slid by 11 basis points to 7.289 percent from the previous rate of 7.399 percent.

"The same market sentiments have been driving the rates downward," National Treasurer Omar Cruz told reporters after yesterday's weekly T-bill auction.

The treasurer was referring to expectations that the government would have improved its fiscal position.

Cruz earlier said the government's budget deficit for 2005 could have fallen to below P160 billion, much better than the deficit ceiling of P180 billion set for last year.

Official data on the 2005 budget deficit would be released next week.

The decreasing budget deficit has allowed the government to trim its borrowing requirements. Cruz said the Bureau of Treasury would adjust the domestic borrowing program originally set for the first quarter of this year, in light of the positive fiscal developments.

The Treasury was supposed to borrow P75 billion from the domestic market, by floating T-bills and bonds, in the first quarter. Cruz said the new domestic borrowing program for the first three-month period would be announced in the next few days.

The decreasing need for government borrowings matches the lingering high level of liquidity among banks. Cruz said this gives more room for interest rates to further slide.

Cruz noted that this week alone, there is already a huge mismatch on demand and supply of government securities.

91-DAY/ B2

SUNNY AND BRIGHT
The bright colors of the wares on sale match the smile on the young girl's face as she tends to a souvenir shop on the island of Boracay. The number of tourists out to grab a tan on the island has been seen to be on the rise. ARNOLD ALMACEN/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

RP posted BOP surplus of $2.41B in 2005

By Doris C. Dumlao

STRONG FOREIGN EXCHANGE inflows, which catapulted the peso's value against the US dollar in 2005, have allowed the Philippines to post a balance of payments surplus of $2.41 billion as against a deficit of $280 million incurred in 2004.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. yesterday said the strong surplus was "due to the double-digit growth in OFW (overseas Filipino workers) remittances, strong inflows of foreign direct investments and portfolio investments, government borrowings and high investment income (from offshore ventures)."

For the month of December alone, when OFW remittances peaked for the holidays, the country yielded a BOP surplus of $273 million, reversing the deficits seen in the two previous months.

The BOP windfall for this year exceeded the expectations of the BSP, which earlier targeted a surplus of only $853 million this year.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the domestic economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

Net foreign portfolio investments, or those placed in local stocks, debt papers and bank products, surged to $2.1 billion in 2005.

Foreign direct investments surged 64.4 percent to a net of $863 million from January to October 2005 versus a year ago.

PDIC to sell 45,000 PLDT shares

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORP. YESTERDAY issued a notice to sell a block of 45,475 shares of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. previously held by 18 banks, mostly rural banks, that were closed by the deposit insurer.

PDIC said it would entertain sealed offers for the PLDT shares on or before Jan. 27 and that it would only accept cash.

Big blocks came from Philippine Investment System Organization or Piso Bank, 12,680 shares; Prime Bank Inc., 11,850 shares; Commonwealth Savings and Loan Bank, 8,320 shares; Pacific Banking Corp., 3,975 shares; Homeowner's Savings and Loan Association, 3,150 shares and Peninsula Development Bank , 1,350 shares.

Others have between 80 and 950 shares of PLDT.

The PLDT shares were covered by 204 stock certificates. *Clarissa S. Batino*

Strong peso, repayments cut gov't debt in October

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S LEVEL OF debt slid month-on-month by 2 percent to P3.95 trillion as of end-October last year, as the improving fiscal situation eased its need for borrowings.

The debt figure, if divided among the estimated 85.2 million Filipinos, would mean that each citizen would have a share of P46,361 in the government's liabilities, which was lower than the P47,183 in September.

The lower government debt level meant that it retired more liabilities than what it incurred during the month.

The decline in the debt figure represented a reversal of the 2-percent increase in September, when the government sold $1 billion in global bonds and P44 billion in retail Treasury bonds.

Data from the Department of Finance showed that of the P3.95 trillion in debt, domestic borrowings accounted for P2.146 trillion while foreign debt made up P1.805 trillion.

Domestic debt as of October was 0.1 percent higher than the September level, but foreign debt was 3.7 percent lower than the month-ago figure.

The DOF said the decline in foreign debt was also due to the appreciation of the peso and other currencies against the US dollar, which eased the debt burden by about P8 billion.

The peso-dollar rate used in settling debts in September was pegged P56:$1, while the rate used in October was P55.05:$1

Of the domestic debt, P2.116 trillion was raised through the issuance of government securities while the rest came from loans contracted by line agencies and assumed by the national government.

Of the foreign liabilities, P1.06 trillion represented proceeds from the sale of foreign-denominated securities, such as US dollar-, Japanese yen- and euro-denominated bonds. The rest were loans contracted by line agencies and assumed by the government, including official development assistance.

DOF data also showed that the government's contingent liabilities reached P602 billion, up from the September level of P597 billion. Contingent debt represents borrowings made by line agencies or state-owned firms that were guaranteed by the national government. It becomes part of the government's debt if the borrowing entities are declared in default.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz said earlier the fiscal situation was expected to further improve the government's debt standing. A decreasing budget deficit would reduce the government's need to borrow, while a balanced budget would steadily reduce the government's debt level.

According to the DOF, the budget deficit for 2005 was expected to have remained between P160 billion and P165 billion, way below the ceiling of P180 billion. *Michelle V. Remo*

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Ongpin firm investing P14B in 3G venture /B3

Banks' NPL ratio hits 7-year low /B6

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3. **Strategies for Implementation** - Identifies how a company can implement the CSR program it wants, the possible ways of implementing a CSR program, and solutions to implementation issues.
4. **Measuring Performance** - Discusses measurement tools to determine the success and failure of the CSR program or areas where improvements are needed, and whether the intended results have been achieved.
5. **Project Presentation** - Participants will present a group project on their own CSR strategy, incorporating what they have learned throughout the program.

The Reinventing CSR Program is intended for companies and non-governmental organizations in the Asia-Pacific Region that are interested in good corporate citizenship and sustainable development.

For more information
Please contact Ms. Vanessa T. Soliva, Research Associate, RVR Center for Corporate Responsibility, Asian Institute of Management,
123 Paseo de Roxas, Legaspi Village, Makati City 1260, Philippines;

Tel No: (632) 892-4011; Fax No: (632) 752 1208;
Email address: vsoliva@aim.edu; Website address: www.rvr.aim.edu

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Thoughts on the Cha-cha

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

PROCTER AND GAMBLE IS TAKing a gamble in expanding its factory producing baby's diapers. So we must be at the bottom.

In Pattaya, I again decided to have a foot massage as it helped me so much last year. There are many parlors with up to 50 chairs and attendants, and at night, they are filled with tourists. The standard change is 200 baht (P240) for one hour, and they use acupressure. One night, in a side street, I saw an empty parlor advertising 'foot massage, 100 baht.' Unable to resist a bargain, I went in and guess what--they only massaged one foot.

In the hotel, we had a jacuzzi. When my daughter was asleep, my wife and I decided to take a bath together. Suddenly, she looked down at me and said, "too big." I was flattered, of course, but replied, "after 10 years of marriage, you are complaining?" "No, you idiot. *Tubig* means water." I was deflated.

I went into a record store and asked the salesgirl if she had any classical records. She gave me Roll Over Beethoven, a film about a dog. When I explained this to her, she gave me Cat Stevens in Concert. That really hurt my felines. Finally, in despair, she handed me Eminem, which even I know are chocolates. Does any store have CDs on Les Miserables, symphonies and concertos of Mozart and other 18th century composers?

All my stories have an element of truth in them, except that they are exaggerated for dramatic effect, hopefully to amuse you.

I eliminated 38 e-mails with attachments today without even looking at them. If you want them read, send them to mrbearbull2010@yahoo.com

* * *

AFTER the anticipated Christmas and New Year rally that occurred for the 10th time in 11 years, the market began to churn. This means that the Phisix lost its direction and began to consolidate. This is not surprising, given some of the political statements made last Friday when FVR asked GMA to cut short her Presidency. Since then, there seems to have been a healing, but it depends on which newspaper you read.

I would guess that GMA is determined to finish her term so the next question is whether there will be a parliamentary system, and whether elections will go ahead in 2007. I see no reason why they should not, as it is in the Constitution. In any case, a change in the system is unlikely to take place before 2010 because it needs careful planning.

In the French system, there is a president and a prime minister. The word prime means first, so he is the top man. However, at the recent meeting of the EU, President Chirac represented France and negotiated toughly, refusing to give up any form of subsidies, even though the UK reduced its rebate. The French President is no symbol, he has power, so who is the true leader?

Confusion in authority became evident late last year when Muslims complained of being discriminated against and treated as second class citizens, even though they had European passports. They continued setting fire to hundreds of cars every night for over a week while a confused, inept government looked on, uncertain what to do. A country can only have one leader, so the British system is better.

We have had a parliamentary system since about 1350 and it works very well. Each of about 680 districts elects a representative from one of three parties: Labor, Conservative or Liberal. Unlike the US and the Philippines, personalities are of far less importance than policies. Margaret Thatcher was elected three times despite being overbearing and condescending. Nobody liked her, even her own party, and her opponents feared her. Yet she was the greatest Prime Minister of the 20th century. She single-handedly wiped out Communism and denationalized industries so that they become profitable. I greatly admire her and I am saddened by her frailty after several strokes.

Our present Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is good-looking and very charismatic. He is a great speaker, much like Bill Clinton, but with higher moral standards. Yet he is very unpopular because he supported President Bush in the war against Iraq. The majority of the population was against it, more so, after the London bombings wherein 66 people died. Because of his personal unpopularity, even within his party, the Labor Party won a third term but with a substantially reduced majority. Nevertheless, it still governs effectively and the UK had 43 successive quarters of growth in GDP, probably a record for any country.

While France has a weak economy, double-digit unemployment and dependence on the rest of Europe to subsidize its inefficient system of farming, the UK has a strong, though faltering economy, and its rate of unemployment is only half that of France of Germany. Probably, staying out of the Euro, and keeping the pound helped.

MR. BEARBULL/ B3

CURRENCIES

January 16, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.824063	1.000000	52.4400
Japan	Yen	0.007215	0.008755	0.4591
United Kingdom	Pound	1.463535	1.776000	93.1334
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.106314	0.129012	6.7654
Switzerland	Franc	0.645261	0.783024	41.0618
Canada	Dollar	0.710644	0.862366	45.2225
Singapore	Dollar	0.506461	0.614590	32.2291
Australia	Dollar	0.622592	0.755515	39.6192
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.186364	2.653153	139.1313
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.219738	0.266652	13.9832
Brunei	Dollar	0.504910	0.612708	32.1304
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000088	0.000107	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.020836	0.025284	1.3259
UAE	Dirham	0.224363	0.272264	14.2775
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.213500	63.6359
Argentina	Peso	0.271699	0.329707	17.2898
Brazil	Real	0.362385	0.439754	23.0607
Denmark	Kroner	0.134025	0.162639	8.5288
India	Rupee	0.018699	0.022691	1.1899
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.220344	0.267387	14.0218
Mexico	New Peso	0.078076	0.094745	4.9684
New Zealand	Dollar	0.575865	0.698812	36.6457
South Africa	Rand	0.136965	0.166207	8.7159
Korea	Won	0.000835	0.001013	0.0531
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025796	0.031304	1.6416

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- Tuesday, January 17 at 12:00 noon and 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, January 18 at 6:00 p.m.

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SMC food unit sues Swift for ₱126M in debt

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL FOODS INC. (SMFI), THE FOOD and beverage arm of San Miguel Corp., has asked the Pasig Regional Trial Court to compel Swift Foods Inc. to pay P126 million worth of assorted broiler feeds it acquired from SMFI.

In its complaint, SMFI said Swift had paid only P69.7 million out of the P188 million it owed SMFI.

Swift president Luis Bernardo Concepcion told INQUIRER in a brief telephone interview that the company was recognizing its debt of P126 million with SMFI. He said the company was not able to pay the amount because its operations were hurt by the bird flu scare that dampened the poultry market two years ago.

"We hope we can settle this amicably. I am quite optimistic we can settle this in a gentlemanly manner," Concepcion said.

Including interest payments, Swift's total obligations had already reached P126 million as of October 2005.

In September 2004, SMFI agreed to supply and deliver broiler feeds to Swift. It extended a 60-day credit limit to the buyer. Under their agreement, any unpaid amount in excess of the 60-day term extended by SMFI will be subject to cost of money at the rate of 1.5 percent a month until fully paid.

Between September 2004 and February 20050, SMFI delivered P188 million worth of broiler feeds to Swift's manufacturing plants in Bulacan, Isabela, Cagayan de Oro , Cebu, General Santos and Zamboanga.

The bulk went to

SMC/ B3

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 16, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	35.5	36.5	35.5	36	6,819,200
Bank of the Phil. Islands	56	56.5	56	56	656,700
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	63	64	61	62.5	324,500
International Exch. Bank	20.5	20.5	20.5	20.5	400
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33	33.5	33	33	345,200
Philippine National Bank	32.5	33	32.5	33	5,000
Security Bank Corp.	36.5	36.5	36	36.5	160,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	31.5	31.5	31	31	3,300
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	25	25	25	25	200
Manulife Financial Corp.	3115	3200	3115	3200	20
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	95,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2170	2170	2170	2170	120
Ivantage Corp.	0.65	0.65	0.63	0.63	970,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	52	53	52	53	646,200
Manila Electric Co. A	14	14	14	14	19,700
Manila Electric Co. B	21.5	21.5	21.25	21.25	121,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.3	3,464,000
Petron Corp.	4.9	4.95	4.85	4.85	2,218,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	70,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23	23	22.75	22.75	11,800
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41	41	40	40	12,000
Pancake House Inc.	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	50,000
RFM Corp.	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	270,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.48	1.48	1.46	1.46	250,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63.5	64	63.5	64	123,000
San Miguel Corp. B	87.5	88	87	88	20,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.35	0.38	0.35	0.37	12,850,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.06	1.1	1	1.04	14,587,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.71	0.85	0.71	0.85	70,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.6	4.65	4.6	4.6	1,414,000
CHEMICALS					
Corro-Coat Inc.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	8,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	1,100,000
Stenial Manufacturing	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	100,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	16,000,000
Ayala Corp.	335	337.5	335	335	67,160
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.53	0.56	0.53	0.54	1,030,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	8,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.18	2.2	150,000
APC Group Inc.	0.245	0.245	0.24	0.24	110,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	10,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.86	0.88	0.86	0.88	140,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.22	1.42	1.22	1.42	32,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	2,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.18	1.2	404,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.15	3.15	3.05	3.15	1,460,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.18	1.2	1.18	1.2	90,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	4.15	4.3	4.15	4.2	3,740,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	100,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.25	0.27	0.25	0.26	25,720,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	1,000,000
SM Investments Corp.	239	239	238	239	49,830
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.115	0.125	0.115	0.12	880,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	10.25	10.5	10.25	10.25	3,252,200
Belle Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	4,375,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	20,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.175	0.175	110,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.16	1.34	1.16	1.3	6,944,000
C & P Homes Inc.	2.06	2.06	1.94	1.94	231,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	0.78	0.78	0.78	0.78	20,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.235	0.245	0.235	0.235	7,090,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.22	0.25	380,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.47	0.47	0.46	0.46	2,680,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.72	100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.48	1.5	1.46	1.46	4,747,000
Interport Res. B	0.0038	0.0038	0.0038	0.0038	160,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	700,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	200,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.017	0.02	0.017	0.02	4,200,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.38	1.4	1.38	1.38	4,935,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.36	11,510,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.105	0.105	0.1	0.1	110,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	1,090,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	200,000
SM Development Corp.	1.44	1.5	1.44	1.48	434,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.9	7.9	7.8	7.9	3,528,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.14	14,700,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	27,100
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.94	0.94	0.93	0.93	1,230,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	750	755	740	740	24,880
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.45	3.45	3.4	3.45	1,598,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1845	1845	1845	1845	11,980
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.195	0.175	0.175	1,500,000
Ionics Inc.	1.12	1.2	1.12	1.2	244,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.048	0.05	0.048	0.05	11,200,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.12	203,000
Philweb Corp.	0.016	0.017	0.016	0.017	474,100,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	2,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	133,900
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	40,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.28	1.3	1.22	1.3	6,769,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.62	1.66	1.62	1.66	4,217,000
Manila Jockey Club	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	643,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	200,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.32	2,040,000
EDUCATION					
Far Eastern University	580	580	580	580	10
iPeople Inc.	3.05	3.1	3.05	3.05	51,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	20,000
Paxys Inc.	7	7.1	6.9	6.9	1,947,000
Prime Gaming Phils. Inc.	34	34	34	34	1,100
MINING & OIL					
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.24	1.32	1.24	1.28	5,987,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.66	1.72	1.66	1.7	7,096,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	50,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.1	6.1	5.9	6	675,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.5	7.5	7.2	7.2	36,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.68	1.7	1.66	1.68	89,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.235	0.235	0.23	0.23	4,900,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.32	0.32	0.3	0.3	19,670,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	47,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	73,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.54	1.56	1.46	1.46	5,004,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	2.34	2.34	2.18	2.2	14,951,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	25.5	26	25.5	26	639,300
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	300,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	8,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	21,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	200,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8	257,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	6,100
PLDT 10% Pref Series AA	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	3,500
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	12.25	12.25	12	12	168,000

91-day T-bill drops . . .

From page B1

There are P12.4 billion worth of maturing T-bills and bonds this week, but there are only P7.5 billion worth of debt instruments offered by the government—P3.5 billion through T-bills, and P4 billion through bonds.

The huge appetite for government securities was reflected in the high volume of bids. Tenders for the 91-day bill reached P2.18 billion, while that for the 182-day bill stood at P7.4 billion. Bids for the 364-day bill amounted to P6.61 billion.

The government was only borrowing P1 billion through the 91-day, P1 billion from the 182-day, and P1.5 billion from the 364-day bill.

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Shares

From page B1

Bank. Equitable was down 0.8 percent at P62.50.

Other actively traded stocks were Bank of the Philippine Islands, which ended down 0.9 percent at P56, and Ayala Land, which closed down 2.4 percent at P10.25.

First Philippine Holdings was up 2.9 percent at P53, ahead of the February initial public offering of its power generation unit First Gen Corp.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was unchanged at P1,845. *AP*

Peza OKs 11 projects worth P307M

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE Authority said it had approved the registration of 11 projects worth P307 million in the first 10 days of the year.

Peza Director General Lilia de Lima said the projects included two economic zone developments and nine information technology-based services and manufacturing of products for export.

The biggest projects were those of economic zone developer Jovima Management and Development involving the operation and maintenance of a P115-million, seven-story building and a P79.7-million, four-story building.

Also approved was a P34.7-million back office transaction processing operation, a P32-million manufacturing facility for protective tapes and films for liquid crystal displays, and P24.6 million contact call center.

Peza declined to give further details, saying this was subject to the express permission of the companies involved.

De Lima said the total cost of the investments approved was 57 percent higher than the P196.5 million registered in the first 10 days of 2005.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila recently announced that projects approved by Peza and the Board of Investments reached a total of P231 billion last year, an increase of about 24 percent from the P186.3 billion posted in 2004.

Favila also said the amount was 10 percent higher than the 2005 target of P210 billion.

Ongpin firm investing ₱14B in 3G venture

Partnership with Hong Kong's Hutchison Whampoa Ltd. seen

By Clarissa S. Batino

CONNECTIVITY UNLIMITED REsources Inc. (Cure), controlled by former trade minister Roberto Ongpin, said he would infuse up to P13.7 billion into its third-generation or 3G mobile venture in the first four years of its operations.

Cure was one of the four companies (and the only new player) that received the 3G license and frequency bands from the National Telecommunications Commission. Smart Communications Inc., Globe Telecom Inc., Digitel Mobile Phils. Inc. (operator of Sun Cellular) also got 3G permits.

Sources from the NTC said Cure would tie up with Hong Kong's Hutchison Whampoa Ltd., a company controlled by billionaire Li ka-shing, which is an active 3G player in many countries.

The Ongpin group controls Eastern Telecommunications Phils. Inc. through listed firm ISM Communications Inc. The group also owns Philweb.

Other 3G applicants had questioned the NTC's decision to award Cure a 3G license despite its lack of track record and experience. One of the applicants claimed Cure had failed to comply with the NTC's roll out plan.

The Ongpin company said it would position itself as a "pure 3G operator. It expects to acquire approximately 30 to 35 percent of the early adapters from 2G to 3G in the first three years of service."

Cure's market share was projected to stabilize at 33 percent from the sixth year of operations.

The company is targeting about 750,000 customers in the first year of operations and about three million subscribers on the fifth year. By the 15th year of operations, Cure said it would have about five million 3G users.

The Ongpin telco projected a net income of more than P2 billion by the fourth year of operations from a net loss in the first three years. Profits are expected to grow to more than P8 billion by the sixth year and more than P18 billion by the 15th year.

Revenue targets were set at P8.2 billion for the first year and P40 billion for the fourth year. By the 15th year, revenue is seen to hit P88 billion.

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LBP seeks end to Capwire rehab

By Clarissa S. Batino

A RESTLESS CREDITOR OF CAPITAL WIREless Inc. wants to liquidate the firm's remaining assets after failing to service its P1-billion debt in the last five years.

Land Bank of the Philippines asked the Makati court last Jan. 11 to terminate Capwire's rehabilitation plan for its failure to achieve financial goals and, consequently, to pay its creditors.

According to LandBank, Capwire also failed to attract an investor and that it later made an "explicit admission" that the restructuring agreement could not be implemented.

LandBank also justified its move by citing failure of the rehabilitation plan to yield satisfactory results ever since its inception.

"All through the years that the creditors cooperated to rehabilitate [Capwire], the latter miserably failed to show that it can still be rehabilitated," LandBank said in its petition.

Other creditors of Capwire include Development Bank of the Philippines, Bank of the Philippine Islands (having assumed the assets of the former Far East Bank), United Overseas Bank, Philippine National Bank and Export-Industry Bank.

The Santiago family, which controls Capwire and Philippine Telegraph & Telephone Corp., said in October last year that it was seeking new investors for both companies. The family wants a new partner who will infuse P500 million into both Capwire and PT&T.

Maureen Santiago, president of Capwire said the company was in talks with various groups that might put in at least $5 million in fresh capital.

Capwire filed a petition for suspension of payments with the Securities and Exchange Commission in July 2000.

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SMC food unit sues Swift . . .

From page B2

Bulacan where P87.6 million worth of feeds were delivered, followed by Cagayan de Oro, P54.6 million; Cebu, P28.7 milion; Isabela, P15.7 million; General Santos, P1.8 million, and Zamboanga, P234,000.

"In gross and wanton violation of its obligations, defendant (Swift) only paid plaintiff (SMFI) the aggregate amount of P69.7 million, leaving an unpaid balance of P126.2 as of Oct. 31. Despite repeated demands, defendant failed and refused , and still fails and refuses to pay plaintiff the unpaid balance," SMFI said in its complaint.

The complaint dated Dec. 16 was filed by SMFI's legal counsel, Anacleto Diaz & Associates.

Last September, Concepcion-led RFM Corp. said it took Swift Foods out of its books by transferring the shares it holds in the poultry processor to shareholders via issuance of preferred shares.

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Mr. Bearbull

From page B2

During the period preceding an election, all parties are allowed to make 15-minute documentaries on their policies, and there are debates every night with participants of all parties putting forward their point of views on defense, health, education, abortion, cloning, same-sex marriages, and many other contentious topics. Each party prints its manifesto clearly, stating its position on each topic, and this is distributed door-to-door to the electorate. Vote buying is unheard of and the entire election is kept at a low key, all very gentlemanly and British. The results are known within four hours.

In the end, the electorate votes for the party whose manifesto coincides most closely with its own ideas. Personalities are ignored, only policies matter. The situation in the US and here is exactly the opposite. Both countries follow the personality cult and few of the candidates have clear policies or parties. They go into politics for power and the money that goes with it.

Not only does the present system have to change to eliminate the constant gridlock between Congress and the Senate, but the electorate has to vote for candidates with unblemished records, whose wish is to improve the situation of Filipinos, particularly the poorest. Will it ever happen? I don't know. I can only hope.

The $64,000 dollar question is whether the Senate will write its own obituary. Senators are appointed to represent the nation whereas Congressmen only represent their precinct. Senators are fewer in number and receive a substantially higher allowance. Furthermore, they have the power to block the President so there is a system of check and balances.

Will the Senate merge with Congress? I cannot see how it will benefit them. Their rank and remuneration will be reduced and I cannot see what advantage will accrue to them. So, although a shift to a unicameral body would move legislation forward and be beneficial to the nation, I doubt that the Senate will simply surrender its power. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com or mrbearbull2010@yahoo.com*

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NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that the Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co. A Shares Cert. No. 325132-708 shares issued on 04/10/1989 & B Shares No. 285681-100 shares issued on 04/10/1989 under Alberto Manahan were declared lost. If no contest received, new certificates will be issued. (PDI- JAN. 03, 10 & 17, 2006)

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PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

NOTICE TO THE DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED RURAL BANK OF ZAMBOANGUITA (NEGROS ORIENTAL), INC.

1. Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 12 dated January 5, 2006 ordering the closure of the Rural Bank of Zamboanguita (Negros Oriental), Inc. (RBZI), the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) will start its operations for the servicing of claims for insured deposits in the closed RBZI on Wednesday, January 11, 2006.
2. Depositors are requested to proceed directly to the premises of RBZI where they can file their claims with the PDIC representatives from January 11 to January 27, 2006, during office hours (8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.), Monday to Friday.

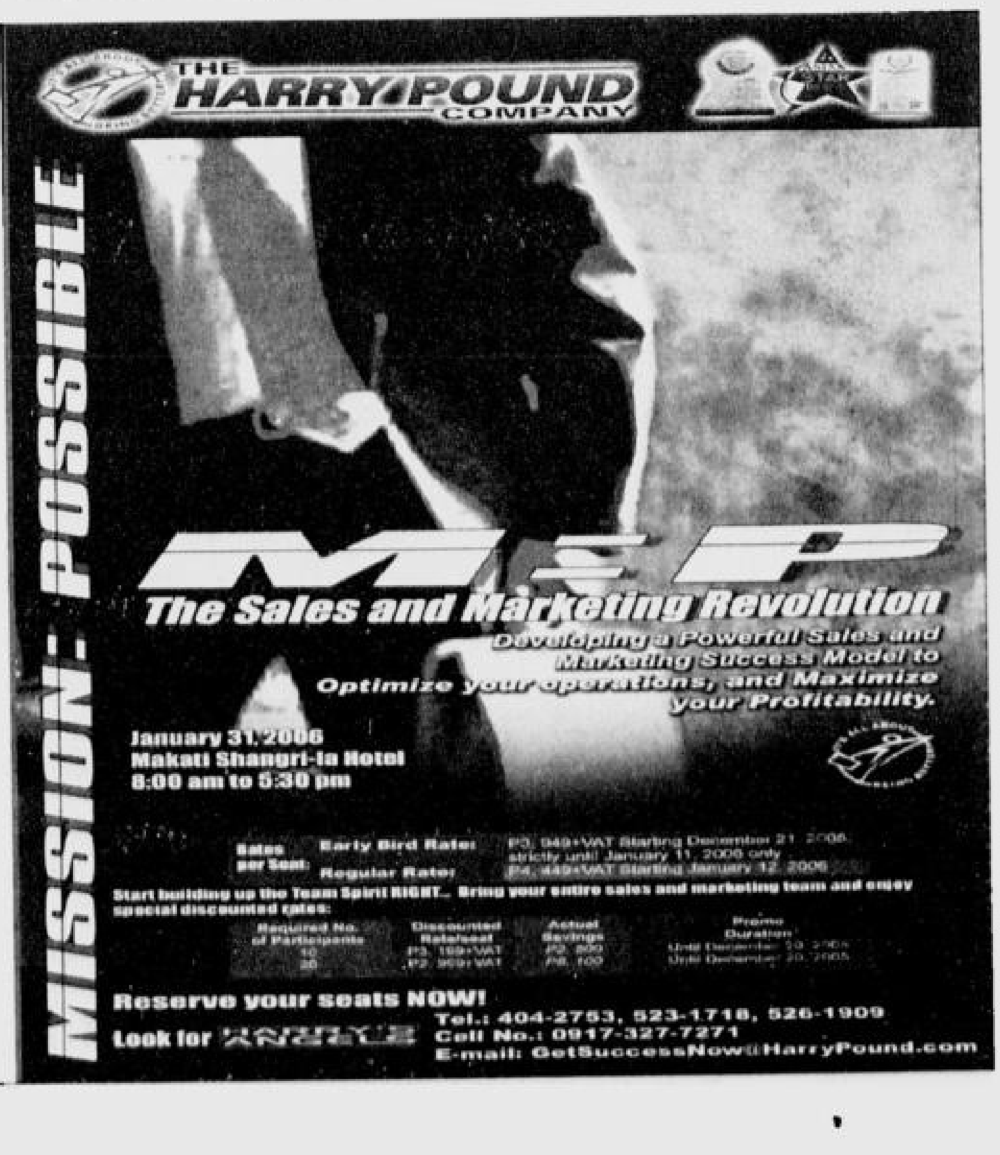
   After the said date, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC Claims Counter, 6th Floor, SSS BLDG, Ayala Avenue corner V.A. Rufino St., Makati City from Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. or by mail to:

   The Manager
   Claims Processing Department
   Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
   2228 Chino Roces Avenue
   1231 Makati City
3. Depositors are advised to present the following requirements to the PDIC representatives when filing their claims:
   a. Original evidence of deposit such as Savings Passbook, Certificate of Time Deposit, or Bank Statement including Unused Checks.
   b. Two (2) latest identification cards/documents (IDs) with depositor's signature.

   Other documents may be required by the PDIC representatives in the course of their processing of claims filed.
4. Pursuant to the provision of R.A. 3591, as amended by R.A. 9302, the prescriptive date (last day) for filing claims for insured deposits in the closed Rural Bank of Zamboanguita (Negros Oriental), Inc. is on January 7, 2008. After January 7, 2008, PDIC as insurer, shall no longer accept any claim for insured deposits maintained with the said closed bank.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

(PDI – January 10, 17 & 24, 2006)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Ladislawa Inquimboy Alcantara

Widow of **Conrado C. Alcantara**

Peacefully joined her Creator
on January 15, 2006 at the age of 92.

Her children, **Nicasio** and **Milagros**, **Felicisimo** and **Evelyn**, **Tomas**, **Editha**, **Rosvida** and **Paul Dominguez**, **Alejandro** and **Rose**; Her grandchildren, **Anna**, **Gaby** and **April**, **Conrad** and **Kay**, **Marco**, **Ina** and **André Palma**, **Miguel**, **Cecile**, **Lisa**, **Anton**, and **Patricia**; Her great-grandchildren, **Elise**, **Luis**, **Jandro** and **Amadine**; Her relatives and friends request the reader to pray for the repose of her soul.

She lies in state at the Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati.

A Requiem Mass will be celebrated at 2:00 PM on Thursday, January 19, 2006. Interment shall follow at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque.

In lieu of flowers, a donation to the Ipil Development Foundation, Inc. to support students and seminarians in Zamboanga del Sur will be appreciated.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life;
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. – **Psalms 23:6**

Dr. Abelardo Anacleto Atienza

of Balanga, Bataan

Peacefully joined our Lord
on January 15, 2006.

His wife, **Corazon Abella Atienza**; brothers and sisters, **Antonio** (†) and **Eliza**, **Adelaida**, **Amparo** and **Cesar**, **Agrifina** (†) and **Pablo** (†), **Amelia** and **Jose** (†), **Armando** and **Gloria**, **Alfredo** (†) and **Zenaida**, **Alberto** and **Cristy**; nephews and nieces; and other relatives request the readers to join them in praying for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Funeraria Paz, Araneta Ave., Quezon City, and will be transferred to the Sanctuario San Jose in Balanga, Bataan after the 7:00 am Mass on Thursday, January 19, 2006.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 21, 2006 at the Eternal Shrine in Balanga, Bataan, after the 2:00 pm Mass.

RHENO PEREGRINO GHENT

Born August 24, 1969

Passed away last January 8, 2006
at the age of 36.

He was cremated in Cebu City on January 12, 2006. His family wishes to thank everyone who gave support to and grieved with Rhen's loved ones, friends and relatives. His family requests the pious to pray for **Rhen**.

In Loving Memory

on the Twenty Seventh (27th) Death Anniversary of

EUFRASIA COSTA DE VITUG

who died January 17, 1979

and on the Forty Eighth (48th) Death Anniversary of

VICTOR BELTRAN VITUG

who died February 1, 1958

Their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren request relatives and friends to pray for the eternal repose of their souls.

I have fought the good
fight, I have finished the
race, I have kept the faith
(2 Timothy 4)

LILY dela FUENTE GUERRA

Peacefully joined our Creator
on January 13, 2006 at the age of 76.

Her bereaved children **Frank**, **Abelle**, **Mercy**, **Colot**, **Iyen**, **Rupert**, **Butch**, **Baby** and **Maricar** and their respective spouses **Bonnie**, **Mart**, **Chito**, **Myke**, **Jojo**, **Mariel**, **Benjie** and **Leslie** as well as her grandchildren and great grandchildren, request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Arlington Memorial Chapel, Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, January 18, 2006 after the 9:00 A.M. Mass.

"Even when I
walk through
a dark
valley, I feel
no harm. For
you are at
my side,
your rod and
staff give me
courage...."
Psalm 23:4

MIGUEL LEGASPI MEJIA

was called home to the Lord
on January 15, 2006 at the age of 79.

He shall be missed by his dearest wife **Chabeng**; children **Amie** & **King**, **Mel** & **Evelyn**, **Loida** & **Bobbit**, **Cristy** & **Nap**, **Alice** & **Roy**, **Ariel** & **Arlene**, **Mannix** & **Cathy**, **Viki** & **Ced**; grandchildren & great grandchildren, relatives and friends.

His remains lie in state at **Capilla D of Arlington East, The Garden Chapels, 1354 C. Raymundo Avenue corner Mercedes Avenue, Pasig City.**

Interment will be announced later.

Floreliana C. Bartolome Jr.

Passed away in the grace of our Lord
on Jan. 14, 2006 at the age of 54.

Her bereaved mother retired Justice **Floreliana C. Bartolome Sr.** & her siblings **Becky**, **Roberto** & **Annie**, **Alex** & **Olive**, nieces and nephews request the pious to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies at the Loyola Memorial Chapels, Chapel N, Guadalupe, Makati City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, Jan. 18, 2006.

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CATALINA T. CRUZ	Chapel C-12a, Q.C.	01/18/06	Holy Cross Mem. Park

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How lovely are your rooms,
O Lord of host!
Happy are those who live in your house,
Continually singing your praise.
Psalm 84:2-5

Our Beloved

Lolita Cornejo Palacol

(widow of **+Cong. Magdaleno M. Palacol**)

Peacefully joined our Lord on January 14, 2006 at the age of 82.

She is survived by her children **Esperanza** & **Ric**, **Boy** & **Nancy**; grandchildren **Tin-Tin**, **Lyn**, **Junjun**, **Marcus** and **Kristina**; brothers **Canor**, **Temiong** and **Paking**; sisters **Herminia**, **Norma** and **Linda** and all her relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Thursday, January 19, 2006, 2:00 p.m. at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

ELVIRA MORALES TOLENTINO

UERMMMC College of Nursing Class 68

Peacefully joined her Creator
on January 14, 2006 at the age of 60.

Her husband **NILO**; children **SASA** and **RICKY**, **JUN-JUN** and **AYA**, **BOBOY** and **ODETTE**; grandchildren **ALISHA**, **TRISTAN**, **MIGGUI**, **ANTON**, **KAELA**, and **RICO**;.relatives and friends request your prayers for the repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Mt. Carmel Church, New Manila and will be brought to Concepcion Church, Baliuag, Bulacan on Thursday, January 19. Interment will be on Friday, January 20, at 3 p.m.

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Banks' NPL ratio hits 7-yr low

Bad loans contract while total loans extended rise

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BAD LOANS-TO-TOTAL LOANS RATIO of Philippine commercial banks dropped to a seven-and-a-half year low of 8.74 percent as of end-November versus 9.65 percent as of end-October, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said yesterday.

The month-on-month decline in non-performing loans was made possible by the 4.7-percent contraction in total NPLs alongside the 5.2-percent rise in total loans during the period.

Total NPLs stood at P164.3 billion versus P172.35 billion at the end of October while total loans were reported at P1.88 trillion from P1.79 trillion in the previous month.

Net of interbank loans, the sector's NPL ratio also declined to 10.5 percent from 11.51 percent in the previous month given a 4.5-percent expansion in regular lending.

The banking system's NPL burden fell back to single digit levels in 2005 for the first time in seven years as the special purpose vehicle (SPV) scheme allowed the bulk unloading of bad assets earlier in the year.

The sector's NPL ratio peaked at 18.81 percent in October 2001, but started to ease sharply starting last year as banks scrambled to avail of the SPV Law's incentives. The SPV framework, which expired last April, had allowed banks to clean up about P95 billion in bad assets since last year.

The SPV Law waived some taxes and reduced fees usually collected in the sale or transfer of assets. It waived documentary stamp, capital gains and value added tax while reducing registration and transfer fees by 50 percent.

Restructured loans also dipped as a ratio of total loans to 5.62 percent from 5.99 percent in the previous month on the back of a 1-percent decline in loan restructuring activities. Meantime, with a slower 0.3-percent reduction in non-performing restructured loans over the month, the ratio of non-performing restructured loans to total restructured loans rose to 48.51 percent from 48.15 percent at the end of October.

Debt restructuring can cover a whole range of concessions —including the lengthening of maturity, lowering of interest rates and in extreme cases, the conversion of debt into equity—to give the borrower breathing room and a chance to revive its business.

MWSS seeks $30M to settle Maynilad debts

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS AND Sewerage System will borrow around $30 million from foreign and local banks to settle the obligations of Maynilad Water Services Inc., which will fall due in the first semester.

The MWSS Board of Directors have decided to take out the loan and pay off Maynilad's debts before the new investors take over the water concession in the second half of the year, MWSS sources said.

"The $120-million performance bond that we have tapped from Maynilad will soon run out," a ranking MWSS official explained. "We have to acquire the bridge financing by April."

The MWSS will again request the national government, through the Department of Finance, to back them up when they proceed with the borrowing.

The MWSS last year borrowed close to P10 billion to pay off the unpaid obligations of Maynilad.

The financially ailing Maynilad has not fully paid its concession fees to the MWSS.

The company claims that it is having cash flow problems.

As of 2005, the company paid P800 million in concession fees.

Aside from settling Maynilad's maturing obligations, the MWSS will also use part of the $30-million loan to finance the construction of new water sources and the repair of an aqueduct linking the Umiray-Angat Dam.

The MWSS needs to repair Aqueduct 6 so as not disrupt the water supply to Metro Manila.

FirstGen eyes IPO price of ₱51 to ₱62 per share

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FIRST GEN CORP., THE HOLDING COMPANY of the Lopez Group's power generation assets, has set the price range for its maiden offering in February at between P51 and P62 a share.

This is narrower than the P51 to P74 per share range earlier reported to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Based on the prospectus submitted yesterday to the PSE, First Gen will raise P11.2 billion from the sale of 180.9 million to 219.9 million new shares.

Its secondary offering—or the sale of shares from existing shareholders—consists of 125 million shares at the same price range.

First Gen is holding a roadshow to drum up investor interest in the offering up to Jan. 27. The IPO date was set for Feb. 10.

In earlier disclosures, First Gen said it would use a portion of the IPO proceeds to fund future projects, including its plan to bid for electric plants being sold by National Power Corp.

The IPO, along with the secondary offer, will give the investing public ownership of 25.5 to 33.7 percent of FirstGen.

If plans push through, First Gen will be the first company to list on the PSE this year.

In the meantime, a source said First Philippine Holdings Corp., the parent firm of First Gen, was willing to get diluted in the company to 51 percent the present 88 percent.

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LIFESTYLE

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The art of peaceful thinking

Australian Charlie Hogg says meditation can bring many good things to your life—a sound mind, freedom from stress, better relationships, even world peace

By Pam Pastor

CHARLIE HOGG began his quest for peace around 30 years ago in Australia by joining marches against his country's participation in the Vietnam war. And his street experience left him with a big realization.

"So many of us who were marching against war were such angry people. We were so aggressive. We were campaigning for peace but we were such peace-less people. And what I realized was that we'd never make a peaceful world with that sort of attitude."

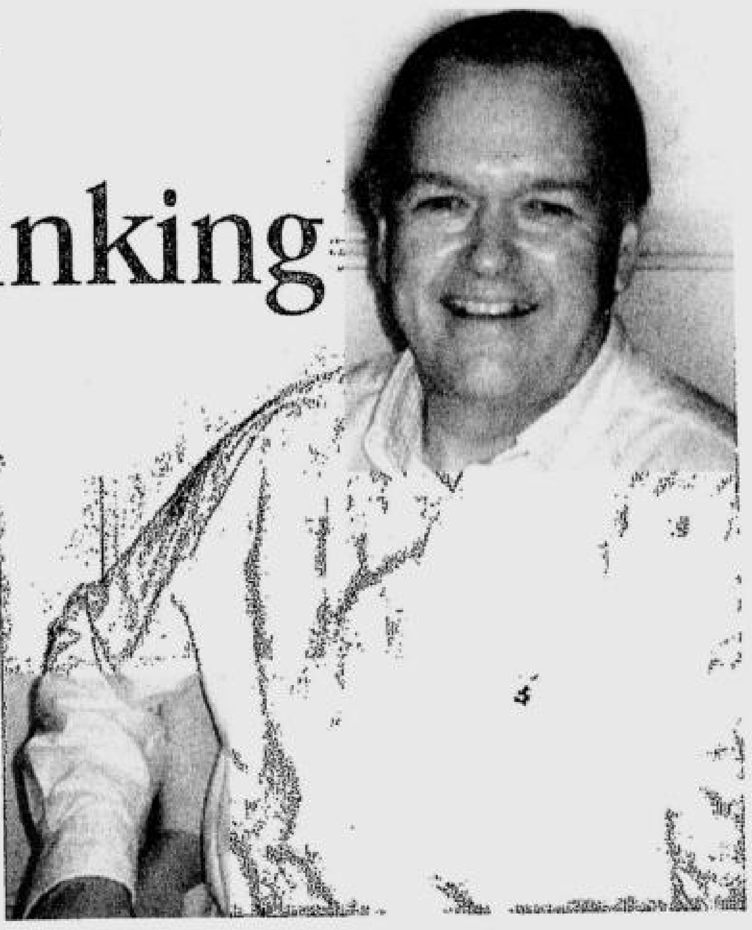
Hogg soon discovered meditation after traveling through Asia, the Middle East and Europe. He realized that it could become his own way of bringing peace to the world.

"Meditation is the simple tool that anyone can use to create peace of mind. It's our personal and powerful contribution to global well-being. I really believe that it's only when we change that the world changes. When I taste peace, when I feel it in my life and I live it in my life, that's the best contribution to peace."

Today, Hogg continues his quest for peace as the director of the Brahma Kumaris Raja Yoga Centers in Australia. He travels the world, sharing his knowledge on meditation, peace and action by speaking at forums, seminars, retreats and workshops—all the way to the United Nations in New York to discuss how to effectively harness peaceful energy for one's self and for those around them.

On a recent visit to the Philippines, he enlightens his audience on how to change the world and their relationships with the help of meditation. After the two-hour session, he answers more questions about Raja Yoga and the good things it can bring to one's life.

"Raja means King, it's sort of the king of the yogas. Yoga aims to discipline your body, your breathing, your mind. Raja Yoga is realizing yourself as a spiritual being, as a soul, and having a deep union of the mind with the supreme soul," he says.


CHARLIE Hogg

Loving oneself

Hogg says people generally have three responsibilities in life—to the family, to the work and to oneself. But in this fast-paced and crazy world, most people end up neglecting themselves.

Ultimately, Hogg says, meditation is an expression of love for one's self. "It's taking time to see what quality of thoughts you're having in your mind and realizing that the quality of thoughts tend to completely create the quality of your life."

He feels that, deep down, people find it very difficult to respect themselves. "We learn how to be confident, we know how to do things well but that doesn't mean we feel good about who we are. Meditation improves the quality of my relationship with myself. I learn to be more gentle, more respectful and more loving toward myself which I think is a very positive thing in life."

The love for self is an important thing to develop, especially in a world full of people who are constantly being too hard on themselves.

"I've talked to thousands of people in so many countries and I've learned that the internal dialogue is so violent sometimes against the self. I did a dialogue with a Buddhist monk once and we were talking about the seeds of violence. We came to the conclusion that violence starts in the way we treat ourselves. If I treat myself in that way, I'll often use that behavior on others," Hogg says.

Chain reaction

Meditation creates a chain reaction of sorts. Your positive attitude toward yourself will lead you to have a positive attitude toward others and the world.

"It's an art form to learn how to value people, learn what's good about people," says Hogg. "It will improve relationships overnight. When you've mentally learned the virtues, the qualities, the positive things of those around you, they will pick it up and respond to you. The foundation of building positive relationships is knowing the value of others and sustaining that value. When we lack self-respect, we tend to put other people down."

Of course, it's not as easy as it sounds. Hogg admits, "There's no doubt, just like any art, it takes practice."

And efforts will have to be made, especially when external factors make your pursuit for peace of mind extra hard. Hogg says the secret is in not letting things affect you like they normally would.

"Meditation educates you on why you're so influenced by things around you and how you can be less influenced. Most people try to change the things happening around them but it's not possible. You can't change people, you can't change situations to a certain extent. What you can do is reprogram your reactions to people and situations. And that's what meditation teaches us. Not to react so violently internally toward others and even myself and just learn the art of sustaining peaceful thinking."

Dealing with difficult people is another thing that can block your path to peace. But Hogg says it's a matter of choice.

Most disarming

"When anyone's hostile or disrespectful, we always have a

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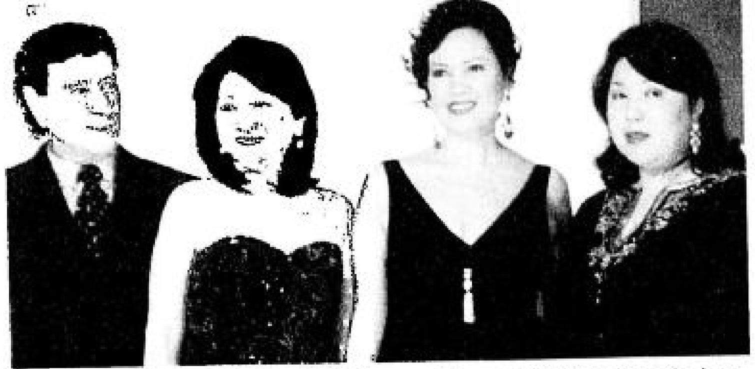
2006 Manila's Loveliest: Marie Elaine Gomez, Maria Angela Medella, Cristalle Ranillo, Jo Christine Napoles and Erica Feliz Marquez

(ABOVE) Outgoing Loveliest gals in their hot dance number: Dianna How, Kathleen Que, Bianca Manalo, Fenina Tugade and Dianne Sison

VIRMA Vergel De Dios, Helen Ong, Joanne Matschuck and Pam Ayson

Five beauties promote one good cause

LOIS Villanueva, Marissa Camacho, Aurora Lapuz S. and husband Ambassador of Spain Ignacio Sagaz, and Chacha Camacho



DIRECTORS: *Moi*, Cinderella's Therese Coronel Santos, foundation chair Nini Licaros, and chair emeritus, Philippine Tatler and Harrison Plaza's top woman, Irene Martel Francisco

ELEGANTLY dressed women with a good cause: Marissa Fenton, Yolly Ayson, Love 14 Foundation board member Carrie Bautista, Fe Rodriguez, Fanny Blanco, Chit Gohu and Nene Leonor

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** using **Kodak** EasyShare system

TRUE TO ITS COMMITMENT TO "bring hope along with the promise of a better and brighter tomorrow," this fantastic charity organization, simply called Love 14 Foundation, held its yearly gala presentation of Manila's Five Loveliest at the grand Rizal Ballroom of the Makati Shangri-La Hotel, *palanggas*. Tons of socio-civic-minded personalities walked on the red carpet to witness this traditional celebration for a good cause.

Five carefully chosen young, beautiful and extremely intelligent girls were proclaimed Manila's Five Loveliest 2006: **Marie Elaine Halasan Gomez, Erica Feliz Marquez, Maria Angela Hilado Medella, Jo Christine Lim Napoles** and **Christalle Lauren Tupaz-Ranillo**. All these gals will serve as ambassadors of charity. They will symbolize hope and the promise of a better life for our less fortunate brothers and sisters, *palanggas*.

Naturellement, a fabulous event like this had to have the best major sponsors, like internationally renowned Roberto Coin Jewelry, which was represented by **Pilar Coin**, the attractive wife of **Roberto Coin** who jetted in just for the occasion. As she watched the girls on stage, she noticed their stylish gowns and I found out they were beautifully designed by two of the country's young top designers, **Jun Escario** and **OJ Hofer**. Hair and makeup were done by Studio 546.

For entertainment, we watched with delight the hot dance numbers by guest performers like **Faith Cuneta, Juaquin** and the Whiplash, and previous "loveliest" winners **Bianca Valerio, Maricris Sarino, Cristal Bagatsing** and **Pamela Ayson**, who also shared the hosting chores.

Bravo to fashion director **Jackie Aquino** who beautifully directed this year's Loveliest Night of the Year, *palanggas*.

Auction

But the real fun part was when a previous "Loveliest," exotic beauty **Raya Mananquil**, modeled for the exciting auction the specially designed heart-shaped pendant in white gold and 4.60 pave-set diamonds that measured 3.4 x 3.2 cm valued at 15,000 euros (P945,000), an exquisite jewelry of Roberto Coin. Well, the lucky gal who got it was **Christina Pappas**, daughter of Love 14 Foundation incumbent president **Naty Arranz** and the late Greek shipping magnate **George Pappas**.

Raya earlier modeled eye-catching eyewear products of Tag Heuer, no less, that were also auctioned off during the event.

As the presentation reached the glamorous summit of the evening, the parents of the Lovelies and everyone who had been involved in this major cause and extended their support and generosity got tons of appreciation and almost unending applause.

True gems

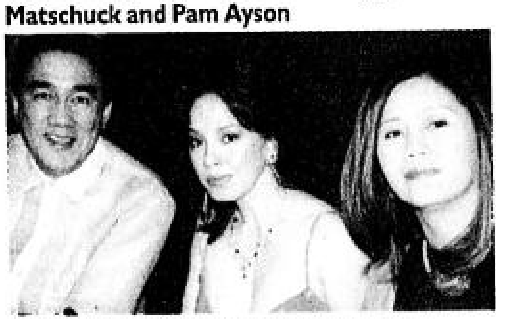
As chair, the elegant and stylish **Nini Licaros** looked every bit the beauty queen she was in a slinky silk gown designed for her and her alone. Well, dahlings, Nini was definitely a show-stopper. She said in her speech, "All of you are true gems of inspiration. There can be no overemphasis on the help that you have provided to our foundation."

All the proceeds of this awesome gala event will go to the scholarship program of the foundation, *palanggas*.

Hey, it's roll call time. Here are the hardworking individuals of the foundation who made sure that many well-deserving girls and boys would receive the scholarship that would help give them a better future: officers—Nini Licaros, its diehard chair; **Naty Pappas**, president; **Therese Santos**, vice president; **Chacha Camacho**, secretary; **Nini Valdez**, treasurer; **Donnie Ramirez**, PRO; and **Irene Martel Francisco**, chair emeritus. Directors are Becky Garcia, Joanne Matschuck, *moi*, **Bernice Palanca Go, Pamela Ayson** and **Ana de Dios**.

Once the band played dance tunes, everyone—young and young at heart—got rolling and rocked the floor with intensity that lasted till way past Cinderella's bedtime, *palanggas*.

Thanks to Biorica Skin Care Product from France and Luxury Sports Vision from Tag Heuer; Paradise Mango Rum Liqueur, which was being served aside from wine, to over 500 guests during the cocktails. And a *trés* special thanks to another previous Manila Loveliest, **Amina Aranaz**, now Mrs. Alunan, for the *trés* elegant Aranaz bags. OK, *palanggas*, please take your bow as we say, "Thank you for your utmost generous support."



BOBONG Velez of the popular Mezze's Resto and Bar, Len Olbes and Elizabeth Litz

FORMER beauty queen Myrna Borromeo and hotshot couple behind Family Rubbing Alcohol, Ernie and Fe Yu

VIVACIOUS businesswoman Milagros How

FORMER Guimaras Gov. Emily Relucio and husband, southern baron Albertito Lopez

WORLD-TRAVELER Sessy Garcia and Gilda Salonga

PRESIDENT Naty Pappas and foundation director Becky Garcia

NINI Layug with May Neri, wife of plastic surgeon George Neri and one of Manille's top hostesses

LOVE 14 Foundation officers and directors: Nini Valdez, Bernice Palanca Go and Ann De Dios

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Pinoy remains immature in sexual matters

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

THIS NEWS ITEM IN THE DEC. 23, 2005, issue of Philippine Daily Inquirer caught my attention: "Group sex among consenting adults is neither prostitution, nor a threat to society, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on Wednesday as it lifted a ban on so-called 'swingers' club.

"In a ruling that changes the way Canadian courts determine what poses a threat to the population, the top court threw out the conviction of a Montreal man who ran a club where members could have group sex in a private room behind locked doors."

Out of curiosity, I sent the story to several Filipino women friends and asked whether they would now migrate to Canada. Replies ranged from, "I wouldn't even think of it," to "Let's go!"

A Philippine Airlines international flight attendant said she heard of a Canadian club called Free Will but a friend said it was very impersonal and mechanical. "Not my cup of tea," she said.

Attitude toward sex and what is acceptable sexual behavior differ from one culture to another. Such a ruling will not be issued here, especially with my Born-Again friend, Art Panganiban, as chief justice of the Supreme Court.

Taboo

In this highly conservative and outwardly religious country, anything connected to sex is taboo. Even movie titles and advertisements are given sexual interpretations. Remember the public outcry over a liquor company's ad, "*Nakatikim ka na ba ng 15 años?*"

I personally didn't consider it morally offensive, but apparently some people thought otherwise. Following the protests, including the slashing of a billboard by an overzealous former mayor, the company withdrew the ad.

This is why this country will never attain intellectual and emotional maturity in sexual matters. We will forever remain in the adolescent stage of sexual development—forever curious because we are never allowed to satisfy our natural, healthy and harmless inclinations.

The more society tries to suppress the healthy and normal expression of sexuality, the more pathological and neurotic a person's behavior becomes.

The average Filipino man or woman will get shocked at the sight of a bare-breasted woman on the street. But in Berkeley, California, for example, I saw two half-naked women walking casually without being arrested or causing scandal. In the world-famous beaches of Ipanema and Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro, as well as in the French Riviera and in Bali, Indonesia, women cavorted and played volleyball with only tiny pieces of cloth for covering. And nobody paid any special attention to them.

Normal

Because these people are used to such a sight, it is no longer a novelty or a curiosity. It has become part of the norm or culture.

Our conservative public officials and the more conservative religious authorities may be unwittingly stunting the Filipino's maturity regarding sex. Discouraging any attempt at sexual liberalization will ensure the public's being forever in the puerile stage of sexual development.

Our moral values are at best pathological or, worse, perverted, but no one seems to realize this, or talks about it. To illustrate, put a life-size poster or picture of two men brutally killing each other on a wall inside a mall. In another spot, put a life size poster or picture of a naked man and woman holding hands or kissing each other.

Which of these two posters do you think will receive the loudest protest and be considered immoral or offensive?

Only recently, in Davao City, a protest was raised against the display of a completely naked statue of the Roman god Apollo. It is the exact replica of a statue in Rome where the Vatican, the seat of Catholicism, is located. Isn't this a sign of a pathological mind? But here we call it good moral judgment.

I agree that a certain degree of censorship must be applied to protect those whose minds may not be ready to see delicate parts of the human anatomy without malice or prurient interest. But this certainly should not apply to the adult population.

I don't believe that allowing adults to see naked men and women in movies and magazines will increase crimes against morality and against women, the most common argument advanced by religious and other ultra conservative groups. No serious, incontestable study has ever been conducted to prove this.

The current ban on the display of nipples and pubic hair in movies and publications has not helped reduce crimes against women. Too many women and minors are being raped and sexually molested, some even by Catholic priests. So what does this show us?

The more we suppress and censor natural and healthy expressions of sexuality, the more we arouse the public's curiosity. Once curiosity is satisfied, it is gone. A person who has had a full meal and is no longer hungry will not want to eat again.

Hopefully we will mature enough to regard the naked human body as a beautiful creation of God, and without malice.

Note: For information on seminars I conduct, books I have written and other services I offer, please call 8107245 and 8926806.

The most intense ab exercises

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

IT'S A MYTH THAT ABDOMINAL exercises are all you need to have a flat abdomen. The exercises, by themselves, do not burn enough calories to make a significant reduction in abdominal fat. Studies have shown that you can't reduce the fat in a particular part of the body by only doing specific exercises for that area.

But abdominal exercises do help to make your tummy look smaller by acting like a tight girdle to hold in your intestines, stomach, and other internal organs. Strong ab muscles also help to prevent lower back injury.

In 2001, the American Council on Exercise, aka the "workout watchdog," asked Dr. Peter Francis of the San Diego University to rate 13 abdominal exercises to find out which exercise worked the abdominal muscles the most.

Four muscles form a multilayered multidirectional girdle around the trunk. The most obvious to the naked eye, the rectus abdominis or the "six-pack" muscle, runs vertically down the middle of your abdomen. The external and internal obliques crisscross the waist in opposing diagonal fibers. And the deepest muscle, the transverues abdominis, wraps around the middle of the torso like a big wide belt.

Comparison

Francis measured the activity of the rectus and external obliques. The traditional crunch or half sit-up was used as the standard for comparison.

Four of the exercises used abdominal equipment—captain's chair (also called a "high chair" or "Roman chair"), stability ball, Torso Track, and Ab-Rocker.

The captain's chair is a gym machine that lets the user "hang" off the ground by resting on the forearms while lifting the legs. It was found to be 212 percent more intense for the rectus than a crunch and 310 percent more intense for the obliques.

Crunches done on a stability ball were 139 percent more intense for the rectus and 147 percent more intense for the obliques.

The Torso Track (a device that you use while on your knees as you roll forward on your hands) was just slightly more intense than a regular crunch. The least intense was the Ab-Rocker (a chair-like machine), which had a sort of negative rating because it had only 21 percent of the intensity you normally got from a traditional crunch.

Put another way, it was 79 percent less intense than a crunch. In fact, it was the least intense of all the 13 exercises evaluated.

Most intense

The big winner was exercise done without equipment. It was 248 percent more intense for the rectus than a crunch and 290 percent more intense for the obliques. Francis called it the "bicycle maneuver." Pilates fans know it as the "single leg stretch." To do the exercise, you lie on your back, raise your knees over your hips, tighten your abs and then straighten one leg at a time at a 45-degree angle while you diagonally twist your upper body.

Other top winners were the "vertical leg crunch" and the "reverse crunch." For a complete description of all the 13 exercises in the study, go to the ACE website (www.acefitness.org).

The most intense exercises all involved using the abdominals as a stabilizing force to hold the trunk steady while the lower body did the movement. It makes sense that these types of exercises would be more intense than other kinds of crunches (even one done with both arms straight overhead) because the lower body weighs more than the upper body.

The exception in the "winner's circle" was the stability ball, which was the third most intense exercise of the 13 exercises rated (first was the bicycle, second was the captain's chair, fourth was the vertical leg crunch, fifth was the reverse crunch). The reason is the ball is an unstable surface. It keeps moving underneath you. This makes the abdominal muscles contract hard just to keep you from falling off the ball.

Benchmark

Use this information wisely. This doesn't mean that the traditional crunch is not worth anything in strengthening your abs. It is just used as the benchmark or the standard against which to compare the intensity of the other exercises.

Remember the principle of specificity of training, which states that you only get good at what you train for. If you have been used to doing the "bicycle maneuver," you will probably find doing a crunch on a stability ball a "belly shaking" experience even though the latter is a less intense exercise.

If you are not used to doing abdominal exercises, the bicycle maneuver is not exactly the place to start, especially if your lower back is also weak. Your abs will not be strong enough to hold the lower back in place because of the weight of the legs.

Beginners can do these types of exercises but they need special instructions to modify them (like bicycling at 90 degrees directly on top of the hips) for their fitness level.

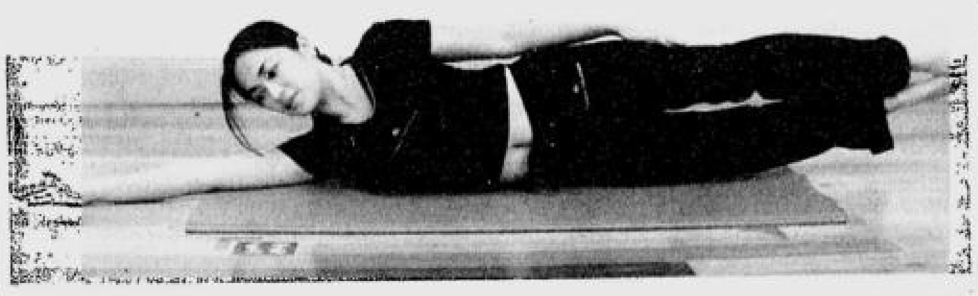
Advanced exercisers have many more challenging choices. It just so happened that these were the 13 exercises chosen for evaluation.

Next week: More abdominal exercise research

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Pilates side leg lift series 3



This Pilates-inspired exercise strengthens the obliques (muscles that crisscross the waist), as well as the hips and inner thigh muscles.

Equipment

Exercise mat

Exercise technique

1. Lie on your side with your legs together and in line with your hips and shoulders.
2. Rest your head on your straight bottom arm and place your other hand on top of your hip.
3. Exhale as you lift both your legs and upper body (slide your hand down your leg). Inhale as you bring them down.

Performance tips

1. Always contract your abdominal muscles first before you lift your torso and legs to protect your lower back.
2. Point your feet as you lift the legs. Flex your feet as you lower them down.
3. Avoid jerking. Move slowly with control as you lift and lower.
4. Keep your shoulder and hip from rolling forward or backward by contracting your abdominal muscles and visualizing a glass of water on your shoulder and hip.
5. Lengthen and elongate by stretching your upper body and legs in opposite directions.
6. Try to keep your neck and head parallel to the floor when lifting. Try to keep knees and ankles together.
7. This is an advanced exercise. Do not attempt this if you have a history of lower back problems. Ask your doctor first.

Repetitions

Do five to 10 repetitions on each side.

Tips for a pain-free new year

Now that the holiday season is over, fatigue and stress caused by heavy traffic, long lines at shopping malls and late night parties might just be starting to take their toll on your muscles. These may well likely result in muscle pain.

Most muscle pain feels like an uncomfortable ache or stiffness and may also include swelling and redness. It is often related to tension, overuse, or muscle injury from exercise or physically-demanding work. Most muscle pain is temporary and minor and can be relieved by simple remedies:

- Rest the painful muscle
- Avoid high-impact aerobic activities and weight lifting when injured or while in pain.
- Be sure to get plenty of sleep and try to reduce stress.
- Yoga and meditation are excellent ways to help you sleep and relax.

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), according to John K. Chen, PhD, in an article in *Acupuncture Today*, "effective pain relief most often requires the use of herbs that activate *qi* and blood, removing stagnation and thus resolving the cause of pain."

"The fundamental etiology of pain is *qi* stagnation, blood stagnation, or both. It is often said that where there is pain, there is stagnation; where there is stagnation, there is pain," Dr. Chen said.

BSI Medicated Spray is a natural solution for muscle pain. It contains six herbal ingredients found to relieve pain, menthol and methyl salicylate. The pain-relieving herbs include *nux vomica*, believed to promote the flow of qi and blood in the collaterals, relieve pain and promote the subsidence of swelling; *drynaria* which is believed to help strengthen bones, promote the healing of fracture; pseudoginseng which comes from the dried root of *Panax notoginseng* helps eliminate blood stasis, arrest bleeding, decrease swelling; and Huperzia Serrate (Lycopodium Serratum) which helps treat inflammation and injury from fall or bumps.

BSI Medicated Spray comes in a handy and easy-to-use 64 mL plastic container, which is non-aerosol, therefore environment-friendly. It is also economical, with controlled release mechanism, and can be used for more than 450 times. There is no need to massage the area as the soothing relief of BSI Medicated Spray is felt right away.

BSI Medicated Spray is ideal for people who undergo strenuous physical activities (e.g. athletes, military personnel), those experiencing low back pain, wrist pain, neck pain, those with arthritis and rheumatism. It can also be used by people who just want to relax their muscles and get the feeling of a massage.

BSI Medicated Spray, a natural relief for tired and strained muscles, is distributed exclusively by New Smart Formulae Trading Corp. (Tel. no. 374-6182 • 374-6179) and available at Mercury Drug outlets.

ADV'T

The art of peaceful thinking

From page C1

choice. I can choose to accept it or not accept it. What we learn in this practice is really not to accept it in the first place... If someone disrespects you, give them respect back. It's the most disarming thing. They wouldn't know what to do. I tell you, human beings, whether they're the President, need love and respect. When we give it to them, they soften and they'll be open to whatever you want to communicate to them."

And it's not just those who deem themselves as the villains of your life but also the people you love who make an impact on your state of mind. Hogg says, "We want loving relationships but we're so fragile and delicate that we keep taking sorrow from the people we love. So one day we love, the next day we're so furious with them. We get hurt and offended. Those relationships are based on ego rather than real understanding. We've become so delicate now that just a thought, a facial expression, just the presence of people sometimes affects us."

Hogg says the key is "detached involvement" or taking the dependence out of the relationship.

"When you begin to practice meditation, you appreciate people. You interact with people but you will realize that all the richness in life is internal. So you're not really dependent on people loving you, supporting you, respecting you. If they do, it's nice. If they don't, it's also nice. You're still involved, you're still connected. But when you take away dependence, you take away a lot of the negativity. There's less control and manipulation."

Hogg says that the less influenced you are by people, the more you can help them. "Even when a mother has a desperately sick child, a nurse is better to look after the child because the nurse is loving but the nurse is not so caught up in the worry. It's a blessing in life when you don't feel so influenced and so sensitive."

Apart from establishing healthier relationships with one's self and with others, meditation offers a lot of other benefits for people who consistently practice it.

Mental and emotional benefits

"A majority of the benefits are mental and emotional. You begin to value yourself more, you don't feel like a victim of your state of mind, you sleep better, and so on. People who meditate regularly have less hospital visits and doctor visits than other people. Your immune system is strengthened when you're happy, when you're peaceful and when you have loving feelings. You have resilience to illness."

Hogg enumerates signs that will tell you it's a good time to study meditation. "If you have highly fluctuating moods and a chronic lack of self value, if you're always putting yourself down; if you're feeling fearful and anxious about people and situations in your life, if your mind is in overdrive, if you can't sleep well, if you don't know how to stop."

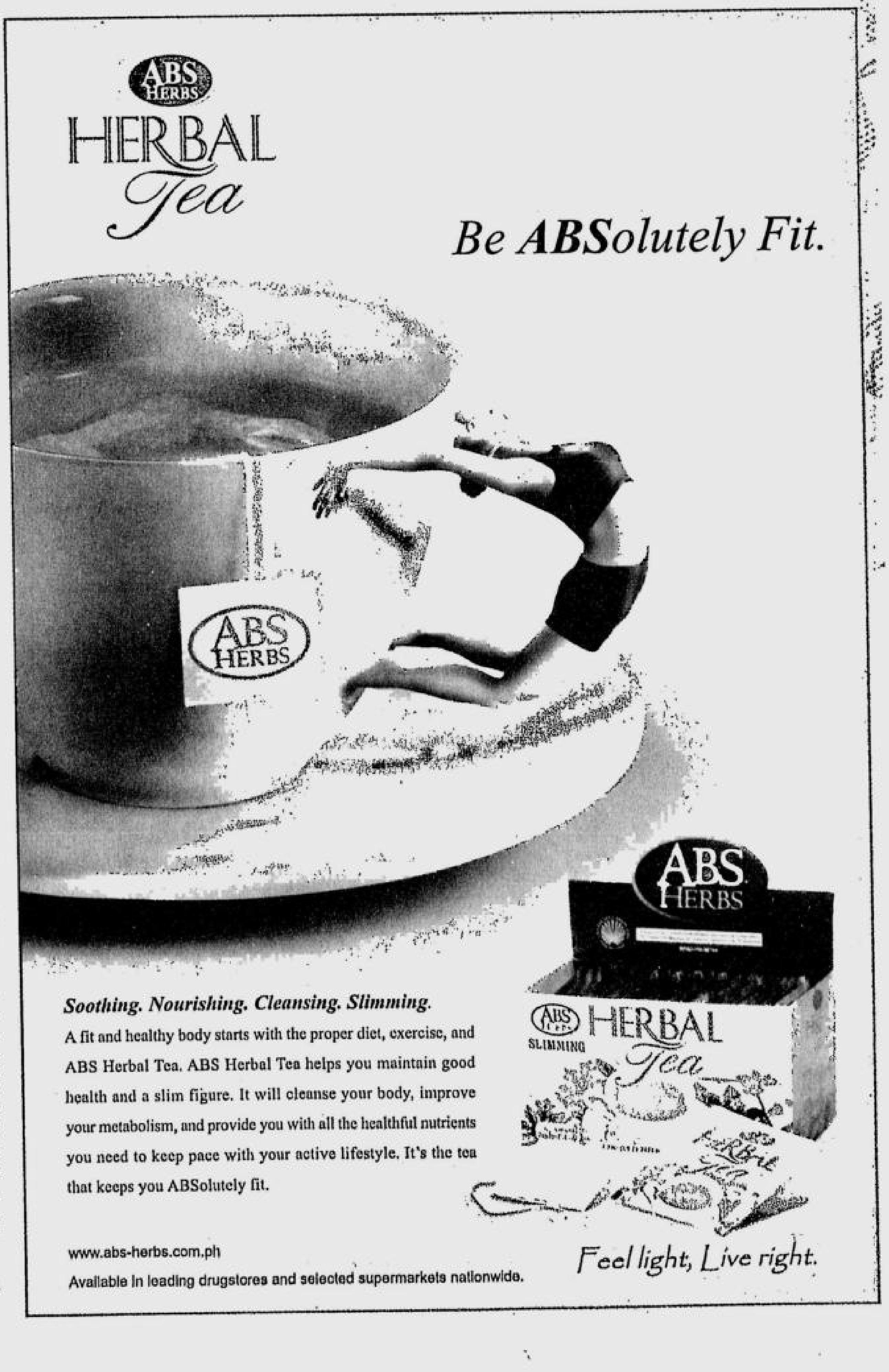
Hogg says meditation is also a good way for people to explore their deeper purpose in life.

But how does meditation fit in a predominantly Catholic society like the Philippines where people might be afraid that the practice would clash with their religious beliefs?

Hogg believes there isn't any conflict. "I've taught Jesuit priests and nuns to meditate. It's a universal practice, really. It's just enhancing the quality of your relationship with God. In the contemporary world, unfortunately, there's a lot of conflict between religions. But I feel that true religion is to be respectful and tolerant of everyone, to give value to every belief. In our centers, there are Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists—they all come and they continue to practice their lifestyle but they also find that the method of meditation helps them connect with God. . . [Meditation] doesn't clash with religion, it's just surviving in the 21st century. And it's free, that's a fringe benefit."

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University has 7,000 branches in about 90 countries. It offers courses and programs for deepening the understanding of universal principles and developing spiritual skills. Brahma Kumaris Meditation Center is at 7484 Bagtikan St., San Antonio Village, Makati City, tels. 8907960 and 8907906; e-mail bkmanila@pldtdsl.net; 4149421 (Quezon City), 5212015 (Manila), 046-4132128 (Tagaytay), 074-4455935 (Baguio), 054-4730622 (Naga), 032-2545975 (Cebu), 082-2286052 (Inner Space Davao), 082-2990509 (Davao).

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph.



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Loving out loud

AS VALENTINE'S DAY approaches, 'Close-Up invites everyone to share their romantic expressions in the grandest of all lovefests, Lovapalooza, on Feb. 11.

Here are sample *kilig* moments from two couples who loved out loud, and on live television.

On-cam proposals

After over a year of dating, Ditoy Aguila proposed to Digital Tour host Iya Yotoko on the Valentine's special of a morning show.

"He was so insistent that we showed up," Yotoko recalls. "We did a simple segment on couples. When the interview was about to end, he yelled 'wait!' Then he said, 'I have something to say to you'. After a long litany of beautiful words, he popped the question and I said yes!"

Vince Hizon's proposal to sportscaster Patricia "Shaan" Bermudez was almost like an exhilarating, heart-pumping basketball game.

"Vince was going to play that day and I was assigned to do the courtside report," says Bermudez. "I heard something from the stadium speakers. I turned around and saw Vince with flowers and a microphone. He said, 'Will you make me the happiest man in the world and be Mrs. Vince Hizon?'

"After a long and deep breath, I said yes! It was like a buzzer-beating, championship-winning moment for the crowd. It was pure magic. He slipped the ring on my finger, and we hugged. I was weeping, and Vince was teary-eyed."

Contest

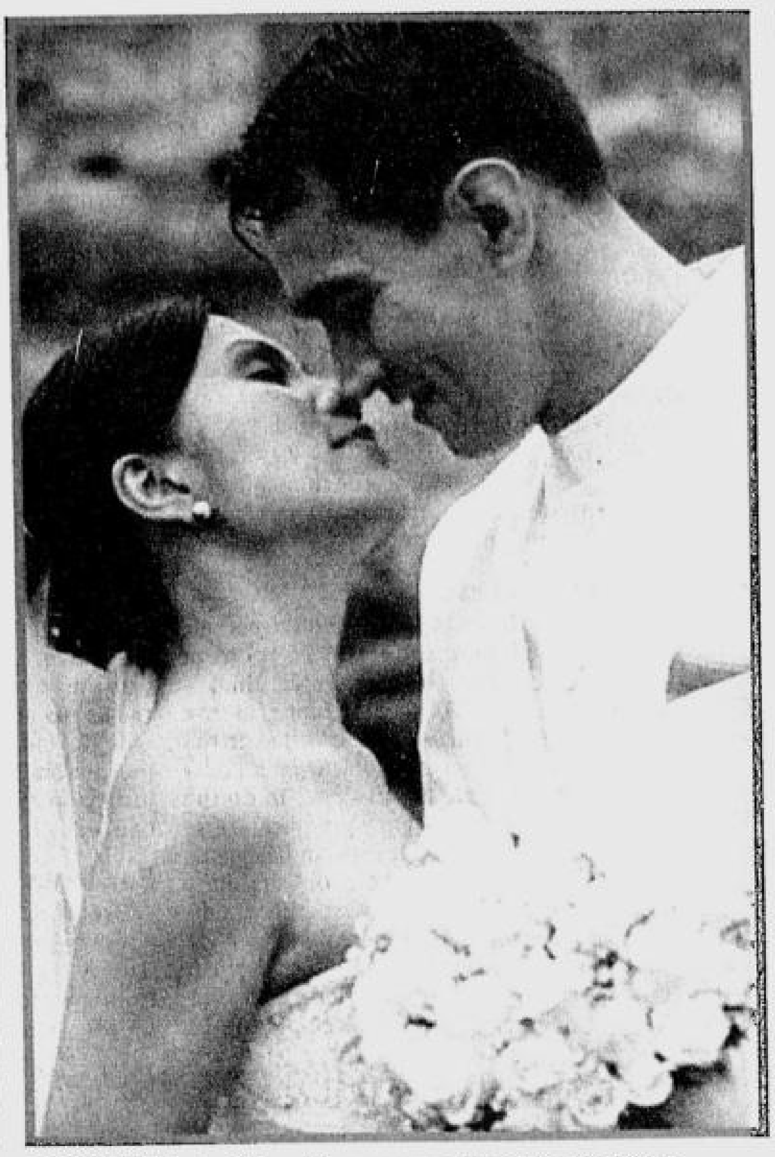
You too can melt your loved one's heart at Close-Up Lovapalooza, the ultimate venue for romance.

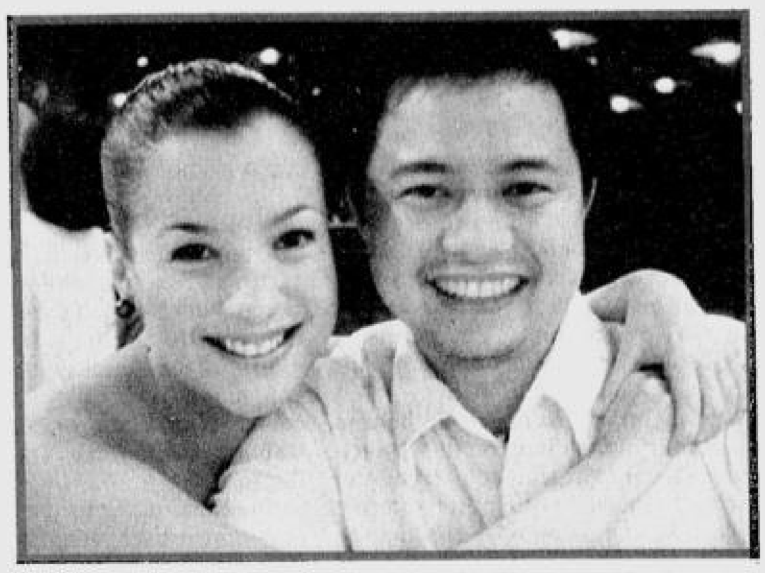
Send your own sweet strategy to Visions and Expressions, Room 303 Townes Building, Pasay Road, Makati City, not later than Jan. 31.

There will be 16 grand expressions of love during the Close-Up Lovapalooza at four simultaneous parties on Feb. 11 along Roxas Boulevard Baywalk in Manila, Bayanihan Park in Angeles City, Ayala Business Park in Cebu City, and Matina Town Square in Davao City.

With top celebrity hosts and musical performers, Close-Up Lovapalooza 2006 is designed to be the year's grandest Valentine celebration.

Make every Lovapalooza kiss sweeter with Close-Up's Valentine special limited-edition Strawberry Kiss flavor, available from January to March!


BASKETBALL star Vince Hizon proposed marriage to Shaan Bermudez on national TV.


TRUE life partners Iya Yotoko and Ditoy Aguila, married for four years now, got engaged on-cam.

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ZENCO SALES, INC.

Balance is key to good health

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

"The way to health is a scented bath and an oil massage everyday."—Hippocrates, 5th century BC

ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS FOR achieving balance is the pursuit of harmony within the body and with the environment.

There are regimens you can apply to everyday life, extracted and distilled from the best Asian ways to achieve balance. You need not hie off to a place as remote and exotic as a Himalayan spa to recharge and rejuvenate the body, mind and spirit. This can be achieved right here in the city or in the privacy of your own home or any accessible place of retreat and relaxation.

Instead of seeking treatment, focus on a natural way of being that will allow you to become stronger and healthier.

Be kind to yourself

Often, we are too hard on ourselves. In daily life, an office worker will stay on the job an extra hour just to finish the paperwork even if he/she is feeling hunger pangs. An executive will skip breakfast just to make it to that important meeting or burn up his/her inner reserves by overloading the day with back-to-back meetings with hardly time to catch his/her breath. Worst of all, a businessman will bring the office—and paperwork—to his house. Sounds familiar?

Begin by being kind to yourself.

1. Leave the office where it is. Don't take it home with you. The home is a place for relaxation. Keep it that way.

2. Listen to the call of nature. If you are hungry, eat. If you have an urgent need to rush to the toilet, by all means go. Do not postpone the important or the inevitable.

3. In-between meetings, deliberations and negotiations, give yourself time for relaxation, enough to do this three-minute breathing exercise: Close your eyes. Sit back. Be comfortable. Recall your favorite music. Hear it in your head. Breath slowly. Exhale gently. Shut out the world. "Listen" to the song till the end.

4. Have five sips of water to energize yourself.

5. Face the world with a smile.

Seek your balance

According to traditional Chinese medicine, everything in the universe consists of the yin and the yang.

Yin is feminine, cold, quiet, static, dark and wet while Yang is masculine, dynamic, bright, warm and dry. Without yin, there is no yang and vice versa. True health can only be achieved if they are in harmony within us.

This equilibrium can be destroyed or disrupted by many internal influences (emotional upheavals like sorrow, worry, grief, fear, shock and, yes, even extreme joy) and external forces (cold, fire, wind, dampness, heat, fire and dryness).

Being one

Considered by the scholars as the oldest healing practice in the world, Ayurveda (*ayur*—life, *veda*—knowledge) and its belief centers on being "one." The vibrations of creation produced five elements: space, water, fire heat that were reduced to three forces—*vata*=air, *pitta*=fire, kapha=earth. It is the balance of these *doshas* that rules one's constitution.

What *dosha* type are you? *Vata* =artistic, nervous/high-strung; *pitta*=aggressive, hot-tempered, driven; *kapha*=loving, affectionate, caring but prone to weight gain. All individuals possess these characteristics but one *dosha* will be dominant.

Healing oil treatment

Vata—calming oils: almond, castor, olive, sesame, wheat germ;

Pitta—cooling oils: coconut, almond, sunflower, sandalwood;

Kapha—invigorating oils: canola, corn, mustard

Warm without overheating your chosen oil. Rub onto your body from head to toe for 15 minutes. Take a hot shower. Feel relaxed and be still for a few minutes.

Note: Dosha preparations are available at Body Shop.

Yoghurt rub

Get 2-3 cups of plain yoghurt. Coat your body from head to foot. Leave on for 10 minutes. Get a towelette and rub your body briskly. Rinse in cool water.

No treatment, no matter how simple or sophisticated, can help you feel better if your mind is not at peace. So, open your mind and allow the healing forces of nature to give you your much desired balance.

Love and light!

Reference: "Spa Style Asia Book"

E-mail the author at coryquirino_fy@yahoo.com.

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What health benefits can be derived from virgin coconut oil (VCO)?

Virgin coconut oil (VCO) has unique properties because it contains the most concentrated natural source of medium chain fatty acids (63%). These MCFAs or medium-chain fatty acids enter the body directly into the portal veins, are processed directly in the liver and immediately converted into energy, and are not deposited as fat. Therefore, less strain to the liver, pancreas and digestive system. It is useful for critically-ill patients and those with problems with fat digestion, including premature babies. And because of its thermogenic properties it raises the metabolic rate of the body, prevents accumulation of fats and can even cause weight loss. Medium-chain fatty acids are usually added into sports drinks and energy bars to provide a quick source of energy.

Contrary to the notion that all saturated fats aggravate coronary heart disease, with its MCFA content it does not raise cholesterol levels in the blood but maintains or increases HDL (good cholesterol) in the blood. Moreover, the lauric acid found in VCO has antimicrobial properties and can kill *in vitro* lipid-coated viruses, bacteria, fungi and protozoa, including tuberculosis mycobacteria, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and helicobacter pyroli (peptic ulcer).

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

Nicky

MEDICard PHILIPPINES, INC.: 9th floor Sagittarius Building H.V dela Costa Street Salcedo Village, Makati City 1227 Trunkline: 867-2020 Fax No.: 894-5720; 810-3855 Text: Key in MEDICARD and send to 2344 (Globe & Touch Mobile) or 4627 (Smart & Talk N' Text) E-mail: inquiry@medicardphils.com Website: www.medicardphils.com

Do-it-yourself 'long and loose' look for your hair

HERE'S GOOD NEWS FOR THE MODERN, FASHIONABLE Asian woman who wants to achieve the "long and loose" hair look but doesn't want to spend hours working at it.

Andy Uffels, Pantene Pro-V's global artistic director, says the "in" hair look may be recreated easily and quickly on your own.

Wash and condition hair with Pantene Smooth and Silky Shampoo and Conditioner. Blow dry your hair with a flat brush, drying it from scalp to ends for a really smooth appearance and add body by drying in different directions.

Blow any hair from the face and brush it lightly before leaving it to hang naturally.

For that special night-out, play with your hair and style it differently.

After washing your hair with Pantene Smooth and Silky Shampoo and Conditioner, further pamper it with a special treat. Using Pantene's Intensive Rinse-Off Conditioner will provide hair with extra conditioning to work on the hair shaft to make it well moisturized, smooth, shiny and strong.

Blow-dry hair with a roller brush until it is ultra sleek and flat to get rid of any frizziness or flyaway ends.

Draw back into a full-bodied chignon or high ponytail, and, again, smooth away any flyaway hair from around the face and ears.

IZA CALZADO, Pantene model, shows off her beautiful long hair.

10th autism week opens

THE AUTISM SOCIETY OF THE Philippines (ASP) marks the 10th National Autism Consciousness Week Jan. 16-22.

Presidential Proclamation 711, issued in 1996, designated the third week of January as Autism Consciousness Week to develop awareness of autism and to promote an environment where autistic individuals can "live with dignity, function independently and contribute productively to society."

ASP has launched several initiatives in cooperation with the private sector, medical professionals, nongovernment organizations and government agencies. It is estimated that Filipinos with autism currently number 300,000.

This year's three-day Autism Consciousness Week has for its theme, "Taas Noo, Angat Autismo."

The event kicks off with a dinner show featuring people with autism on Jan. 20, 6 p.m., at the Legend Villas in Mandaluyong City. Tickets cost P800 each. A Family Support Group Meeting is scheduled Jan. 21 at the ASP office, QC, to be facilitated by Advocacy Committee head Carmelita Almendrala, who has a master's degree in Special Education and mother of a 37-year-old high-functioning autistic. Jan. 22, 8 a.m.-12 nn, is ASP Family Day, at the National Center for Mental Health. Thera Free is scheduled in the afternoon at the Neptali Gonzales Integrated Day Care Center, Mandaluyong. Call 9266941/4368713 or e-mail info@autismphils.org or autism-phils@pacific.net.ph.